

comatose, tell me lies

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comatose, tell me lies

by [voided_space](#)

Summary

[Please read tags and warnings!]

“Very well,” It said after a moment, sounding like it was smiling. Why did the sound send a shiver down George’s spine, the dread from before seeping slowly into the back of his mind? “You can stay for the night, no charge necessary.”

All George needed was a place to shelter while travelling. He didn't suspect that the old ruined temple deep in the forest wasn't quite as abandoned as he first thought, nor that its inhabitant would take such a liking to him...

Notes

title from comatose by the brinks, which is basically the theme song for this fic lmao

i got the idea for this fic the same way i get many of my ideas: at work. there isn't nearly enough monsterfucking content in this fandom, and as a dedicated freak with a love of monsters i thought i'd do the job of providing it myself. so here you go! there will be more chapters to come. enjoy <3

the playlist to go with the fic is [here!](#) (alternatively, just type "comatose fanfic" into spotify and it's the one with the glowy green cover art)

my eyes have faded into sleep

It was his own decision to up and leave to start anew somewhere far from his hometown, George thought ruefully, as he trudged through the mud and rough undergrowth of the forest. It was his own decision and he'd have to live with it. His shirt clung, sticky and uncomfortable, to his skin in the humid air and thorns and vines scratched at and irritated his ankles even through the thick material of his trousers and socks. He glanced up at the steadily darkening sky through the leafy canopy overhead and his brow furrowed. He'd have to find some kind of shelter for the night soon, he didn't much fancy the idea of getting caught off guard by bandits or wild animals in the dead of night. He had no semblance of an idea where the next village might be, he was getting tired, and fatigue and aches were plaguing his joints and muscles. His back and shoulders were weeping at the weight of his backpack, and George sighed as he considered the possibility of just climbing up into a tree and attempting to camp out the night.

He'd grown sick of his old life, the small houses and cobble paths of his hometown becoming a tired sight after so many years living there, and any friends he used to have there having moved out long ago to seek out adventure in the bigger port city across the ocean. George had waved them off with a bittersweet smile, already knowing he likely wouldn't see them again. He was happy for them, but he didn't exactly feel much desire to follow them. He wanted out of the confines of his old life, sure, but he wanted to go the opposite direction. He wanted to dare to venture out across the wilderness and over the mountains that he could barely see from the window of his old house. There was nothing left at home for him anymore, and George wanted to explore. He wanted the freedom of new experiences, the adrenaline of running away, the thrill of not knowing what he'd see next. He'd watched the clouds of many a storm roll dark and low over the thatched roofs of the village and he'd wished to follow their path, to fly on his feet through the long thin grass of the plains like the wild beasts, and to crawl through the underbrush, and to meet new people and see new magic and to live a life so incredibly different from that he'd been living before. And so he'd left.

George laughed, tired and bitter, as he yanked his foot free of a tangle of vines. How long had he been travelling for, now? He was beginning to grow tired of it. He'd had the new experiences he had been so desperately craving, but the realisation had hit him not that long after he'd left that while he'd been longing for a new life, constant travel definitely wasn't it. Perhaps he'd have to look for a new job or something in the next village he came to, perhaps he'd have to focus on settling down once again. He gave a weary smile. Perhaps, somewhere, he'd find someone worth sticking around for.

Just as George was beginning to seriously consider slumming it in an old fox den or something for the night, something caught his eye nestled among the trees ahead. Some kind of ruin, an old temple maybe? The mossy stones rose above the thicket and provided a glimmer of hope for George in the form of what looked like a half-crumbled archway leading into the ruin. Sweet, sweet shelter. He sighed with relief at the prospect of refuge against the elements, and stumbled sluggishly forward. The sun finally slipped behind the trees and off below the line of the horizon as George made it to the overgrown stone steps leading up to the ruin, and he dragged his weary bones upwards, collapsing against the cold wall once he made it inside.

He heaved a long, deep sigh, stretching his legs out and rummaging in his pack for a torch. The ruin was mired in blackness, but as his eyes adjusted to the dark George was able to glance around, checking briefly for any obvious danger before he dared strike a light up for his torch. The place was almost silent, only the quiet rustling of the trees outside seeping through the door to reach his ears. George could just make out the shapes of vines and other foliage weaving between the rough

stone bricks of the wall, creeping along the floor to fall downwards into... A pit? Squinting through the dark, George tilted his head with confusion as he realised what he was sitting on was more of a ledge of sorts, with the floor eventually falling away into a large square pit in the centre of the room.

Lighting his torch and holding it up in front of him, George inched forwards, shuffling carefully across the cold rock to peer over the edge of the floor into the pit. It thankfully didn't seem to go that far down, the light from his torch mercifully reaching the bottom and spilling out onto what looked to be another floor; another section to this temple. The edges of the lower floor were still shrouded in shadow, the glow of the torch flame not reaching much further than the middle. How far did it go? Was there anything down there?

Suddenly struck with an ominous feeling of apprehension, George shuffled backwards rather quickly, clutching his torch with a white-knuckle grip and keeping his breath trapped in his chest until his back hit cold brick once more and he slumped against the wall. This... This was enough. He could stay here for just one night. He'd stay here, in this spot, and he wouldn't go anywhere near the pit or the lower floor, and he'd leave in the morning and carry on his journey and he'd let this weird old ruin keep its secrets to itself.

That was the plan, anyway.

"What are you doing here?"

The voice was deep, a rumble similar to a growl, and George froze. Was there someone else here after all? He whipped his head around frantically looking for the source of the voice, but there wasn't anyone else he could see here. In fact, as the voice spoke again, George realised with a dawning sense of dread that he couldn't even tell where the voice was coming from, it seeming to reverberate around him and bounce off every wall in this place.

"Did you expect no one to live here?"

I mean, pretty much. It was a ruin after all. Still, George reckoned he shouldn't say anything that might be seen as disrespectful by whatever vaguely threatening entity happened to live in this dingy old crumbling temple. He kept the grip on his torch firm, drawing his bag closer to his body and trying to steady his breathing as he replied.

"I apologise for intruding if this is your home," He began, managing to keep his voice calm despite his heart beating at a million miles a minute. "I just need shelter for the night, I promise I'll leave in the morning. I won't steal or damage anything here," He swallowed down his nerves, glancing down to his bag. "I- I don't have much to offer in return, I can only ask for your hospitality. Just one night, please." George usually didn't like to beg, but he was desperate not to have to venture out into the hostility of the forest again.

The voice went quiet, like it was pondering over his words.

"Very well," It said after a moment, sounding like it was smiling. Why did the sound send a shiver down George's spine, the dread from before seeping slowly into the back of his mind? "You can stay for the night, no charge necessary."

"Th- Thank you." George managed. "I really appreciate it." His heartbeat was beginning to steady, and he cautiously reached into his pack for his blanket, preparing to try to get at least somewhat comfy enough to sleep for the night.

"Mm," The voice sounded at least slightly less threatening than it did before. It was still deep and

had an edge of something not entirely human, but the harsh growl was gone, no longer striking fear deep into George's soul. "What's your name? I'm curious."

It was making conversation now? George was surprised, but it wasn't really unwelcome. He couldn't remember the last time he'd actually had a conversation with anyone that wasn't just some quick trade bartering in a village. It would be nice to talk to someone, even if it was in a creepy ruined temple in the woods where he couldn't actually see who his conversation partner was. "I'm George," He said, his initial fear slipping away with each minute he wasn't being attacked or robbed. "I've been travelling for a while and happened to find this place while trying to make my way through the forest. What's your name?" He glanced around once more. "And where are you, for that matter? I can't see you at all."

The voice laughed, a low rumble that surprisingly didn't freak George out as much as it perhaps should have done. "I don't like showing myself to strangers much, not at first anyway. I'm known as Dream."

"Dream, huh?" George chuckled. "That's not a name I've heard before. It sounds nice though! I like it."

"You're cute."

George's eyes shot open. "Huh?"

It laughed again. "You heard me. I think you're cute."

"You can see me?" He glanced around again, scanning his eyes over every corner of the room, but, like before, finding nothing. Was it on the lower floor?

"I can see everything in here. I'm looking at you right now."

George laughed nervously, frantically trying to think of some way to respond to that very ominous statement, mind still battling his confusion over being complimented so unexpectedly.

The voice continued. "Do you want to know why people call me Dream?"

"I- What?"

George's nose was suddenly hit with a strangely sweet, rich smell, like honeysuckle or fruit. Confused, he looked around the room for the source of the scent, breathing it in all the while and savouring how nice the smell was after so long of smelling nothing but grass, mud and his own sweat. He was enjoying it so much, in fact, that George didn't notice how sleepy he was getting all of a sudden. At least, he didn't notice until the edge of his vision started to darken as his eyes slipped shut. "Dream? Is that smell coming from you?" He managed to mumble.

"Sleep well, Georgie..."

George didn't even have time to register the use of the nickname or the darker tone in the voice before his limbs became heavy, drowsiness overtook him and he slipped into the depths of sleep.

falling away into the dead of the night

Chapter Notes

here it is, the second chapter! george finally gets to see who he's been talking to ;)

thanks for being patient guys! i've had a lot of fun writing this chapter, and i hope you have just as much fun reading it <3

George cracked his eyes open, slowly adjusting to the bright glowing green light that instantly assaulted them. He pressed them shut again with a wince, bringing a hand up to rub his face, groaning at the fuzzy feeling still clouding his head. What happened? He sifted through his hazy memories for a moment. Forest... Nighttime... Ruin, shelter, voice. Dream? Wait, was he still..?

George finally managed to open his eyes, a relieving darkness greeting him this time, though he could see the cold floor underneath him and the walls opposite dimly lit somehow by an eerie green glow. George did a quick mental check of himself. Yep, he still had all four limbs. No aches or pains, no new ones anyway. His back and shoulders still hurt, and the way they were currently pressed into the unforgiving rock floor was definitely not helping. At least he wasn't physically injured otherwise.

He was, however, very aware of another problem. His cock was achingly hard, pressing insistently against the front of his trousers and leaving George uncomfortably hot, not helped at all by the humidity of the night air. At least it was slightly cooler here in the ruin than it was outside in the forest. He was still in the ruin, right?

George shifted to make the move to sit up, but halted with a frustrated groan when the friction of fabric against his cock sent a shudder through his body. He slowed down then, taking his time with his movement as he pushed himself up with his arms, settling into a sitting position and leaning back to look cautiously around the room. He didn't see the door he had entered from, nor the silvery moonlight seeping in, nor could he hear the quiet rustling of the trees outside. George's suspicions were confirmed as he looked up, his gaze locking onto what seemed to be the edges of the pit about 10 feet overhead. So he was on the lower floor now? Had Dream moved him there? He couldn't exactly get out on his own, he desperately hoped the other was around somewhere. Wait, what? No, if Dream had dragged him down into the pit... But no, Dream wouldn't do that, would he? He trusted Dream. He- What? Hang on, why was he trusting someone he only just met in a sketchy old ruin and hadn't even seen? What was going on? Why did he-

His thoughts were interrupted as he caught the scent of fruit and flowers once again. Oh no. No, no, no no nonono- Not again. He didn't want to be knocked out again, where might he wake up?

For some reason though, he didn't feel drowsy this time. There was no heavy tiredness dragging him down into unconsciousness, just a sweet smell and a hot flush throughout his body, a pressure around his crotch and a knot deep in the pit of his stomach. A groan turned into a moan when he so much as brushed his hand against his erection, feeling his cock twitch even within its confines. He needed to ignore it, he needed to focus on getting out, but it was too much of a distraction. George found himself hastily shoving his trousers and underwear down, wrapping a hand around his dick with an intense desperation he's not sure he'd ever felt before. He moaned loudly as soon as he touched himself, the contact almost too much as his nerves instantly lit aflame. He needed, he

needed-

“Need some help there, Georgie?”

The voice, *Dream* was back, the low but somewhat amused sounding rumble of his voice raising goosebumps on George’s arms and licking pleasantly at a spot somewhere deep in his brain. His head felt so hazy, but Dream’s voice sounded so good...

“Tell me, George, what do you want?” He sounded closer than ever now, voice no longer echoing around the empty room but instead coming from somewhere in the vicinity around George, somewhere in the shadows behind him or close to his side. He could help, he- Dream could help-

“I- I want to be fucked. I need you to fuck me. Please.” The pleas escaped him so quickly that George yelped in surprise, snapping his mouth shut again as if he could shut away the very confession he’d just thrown to the wind. He didn’t- I mean, it was pretty much the truth, but why had his brain-to-mouth filter failed him so suddenly?

“Already asking so nicely, what a good boy,” Dream practically purred, suddenly directly behind George, who wanted so badly to turn around but somehow felt rooted to the floor. “I’ll come fuck you, George. You even get to see me, how lucky. Not many people do.”

“Wha-” George was cut off with his own gasp as a very decidedly *not human* shape stepped out from the darkness behind him, grabbing George by the waist with incredibly large clawed hands and flipping him around so quickly it left him breathless. As George looked up he realised two things: one, he’d found the source of the weird green glow. And two, that the rumours in the last village he’d visited about a giant, murderous beast living in the forest might not have just been a myth, as he’d previously suspected.

The monster must have been at least 8 foot tall, absolutely towering over George and holding him with huge meaty clawed hands bigger than George’s entire head. It resembled a werewolf, almost; thick brown fur covering its entire body, barely hiding the shapes of muscles underneath, and the chilling realisation dawned on George that he wouldn’t have any chance of escaping as long as the beast was holding him. The thought flashed through his still lust-fogged mind; it could pin him down so effortlessly and take whatever it wanted from him, it could tear his throat out and rip him limb from limb, it could devour him whole, it could, it could...

He let out a shuddering breath.

It could fuck him raw until he was left begging and screaming. And it could do it so, so easily.

The monster grinned and flicked a long slimy green tongue out to lick around its lips, and George’s eyes wandered from its mouth filled with dozens of huge, razor-sharp teeth, up over its glowing eyes and the two pairs of horns emerging from its head, and settle finally on the things that seemed to be sprouting from the creature’s back. Tentacles. Lots of them. They were thick and glowing, made of some sort of slime, something George had never seen before, and they moved like snakes, twisting around the monster’s body and creeping along the floor around it, emitting that eerie light the entire time.

George was terrified. Terrified and unfortunately still very, very aroused.

“So?” It smiled unnervingly wide, its deep purring voice closer to George than it had ever been.

“I- I don’t-”

“Oh come on now,” Its rumbling tone sounded somewhat amused. “You look a little needy there,

why not let me help you out? I'll fuck you nicely, just like you begged me to do. Or do you need a little more... Encouragement?"

George flinched in surprise as he felt something cool and slimy wrap around his ankle, pushing up underneath his trouser leg, and he glanced down to see a small mass of tentacles writhing underneath his dangling legs, reaching up towards his feet. As he stared in mild horror and fascination at the neon green appendages, a quiet hiss caught his attention, and he looked back up to be immediately hit with the overpowering sweet stench once more, stronger than ever. A wave of heat and tingling pleasure shot through his body, and the touch of Dream's hands on his waist and the tentacle on his leg was at once all too much and all not enough. The haze clouding his mind was tinted neon green, and suddenly all doubts that George had were thrown to the wind. It couldn't hurt, could it? Dream would take care of him, he hadn't eaten him or torn him apart yet. He'd fuck him nicely, and then George wouldn't feel so desperate, so needy, so- so...

"Yes! Yes please, Dream I- I need you, please... You can- You can fuck me."

"I knew you'd come around. I'll make you feel so good Georgie, I promise. Let's get those clothes off now, shall we?"

Yes... Yes, of course he needed to take his clothes off. George nodded hurriedly, reaching down from within Dream's grasp to untangle his trousers, kicking them off his legs and watching with rapt fascination as the tentacles grabbed them and threw them off to a far-flung corner of the room, then immediately coming back to curl up around his feet and ankles once more; not pulling or squeezing, just resting there, a comfortable weight moving with George's legs. Dream huffed out what sounded a lot like a laugh at George's enthusiasm, and George felt the beast's grip on his waist loosen slightly as one of the hands moved to grab the hem of his shirt, tugging at it for a moment before Dream grinned again, his eyes narrowing.

"I mean... We don't need this anyway, right?"

And with one swift swipe of a sharp claw, George's shirt was torn in two, the fabric falling away from his body and into the clutches of the tentacles below him. George gasped at the blatant display of strength, and felt a shiver run down his spine as those hands and claws settled once more on his waist, a soft moan escaping him at the way his skin pulsed with heat under the touch.

"You're so pretty, Georgie," Dream leaned closer, the monster's breath hot on George's face and its voice echoing through the green fog still plaguing his head. "You'll look so good on my cock. See?" He tilted his head, prompting George to turn his gaze downwards to be greeted with the sight of another flash of bright green emerging from the fur between the beast's legs. Oh gods, was that..?

Yep, it was definitely its dick.

It was *so big*.

The thought flashed through George's mind of trying to fit the member into his ass, the sheer size of it stretching him further than he had ever dared to imagine before, and he whimpered and squirmed in Dream's hold, a rational part of his brain trying to fight through the haze of lust and need to tell him '*no, that won't fit!*'

"D- Ah! Dream I don't- I don't think..."

But oh, the other part of his brain, the part fogged over with the scent of flowers and fruit, the part stained green with desires not entirely his own, that part was *begging* for him to relax, to lose

himself, and to stretch himself wide over that enormous length, and slide down it until the knot at the base pressed against his rim.

He shuddered, the effort of fighting through his own head wearing him down. He wanted so badly to give in.

“Hmm, well I suppose I don’t want to break you right away, where’s the fun in that? Don’t worry Georgie, you’ll get to take this eventually.” Dream nuzzled his nose into George’s neck, the tip of his tongue darting out to lick the sensitive skin there, his teeth just barely grazing it. “For now though, let’s start with something more your size.”

George only had the briefest of moments to wonder what that meant before one of the tentacles crept further up his leg, curling around his thigh and pressing its tip to the skin just below his dick, right above his hole. He couldn’t help but wriggle and cry out at the sensation of cool jelly in such a sensitive area, especially when he still felt like he was overheating in his own body. He whimpered as it moved downwards, prodding slowly but insistently at his hole, steadily oozing some kind of slime.

The feeling of vulnerability suddenly pushed through his haze, and George reached towards Dream desperately, seeking comfort of some kind.

“Shh, there’s a good boy,” Dream hushed him softly, pulling George in close and resting him against his body, held down against the thick fur with his head on Dream’s chest and that massive cock just behind him, curving up and pressing into the cleft of his ass. Dream held him there easily, one hand on his back pinning him down. His other hand brushed over George’s ass, claws so close to breaking the skin, but never actually harming him. The threat was intoxicating, and George found himself grinding down against Dream’s body, moaning at the sensitivity in his neglected dick and sobbing with desperation when Dream forced him to still, the monster chuckling at his helplessness. “You’ll get your pleasure soon, darling. Relax for me”

Darling. Why did the pet name send such a warm fuzzy feeling fluttering in his stomach? The situation was far from romantic; he was in a gloomy, decrepit old ruined temple deep in the woods, about to be fucked out of his mind by a gigantic man-eating beast, yet George’s blurry mind clung to the fact that the monster just called him *darling*.

The tentacle from before returned, slipping past Dream’s cock to tease at George’s hole once more before finally, *finally* slipping inside. The slime seemed to act as a natural lubricant, and it squeezed inside easily, steadily getting thicker as it pushed in past the tip. George moaned loudly, fisting his hands into Dream’s fur and bucking his hips, pushing back against the tentacle. It filled him beautifully, pressing up against his walls and pulsing, writhing against his insides in an unnatural but insanely pleasurable way, leaving George panting as it brushed over his prostate and sent shockwaves through his body.

“Dream that feels so- Ah! S-so good, please, please more, I- Hhhng... I- I’m so hard it hurts, Dream please-” He sobbed as a second tentacle suddenly pushed in alongside the first, starting small at the tip but widening out even more than the other, stretching George around their combined thickness.

“I know George, it’s okay,” Dream’s voice dropped lower again; something else present in his tone, something between the lines that George had no hope of deciphering, not with his ass stuffed full of tentacles and his head a cloudy mess, his surroundings and memories blurring as he focused on nothing but the way he could feel Dream’s deep voice rumbling in his chest underneath him, and the way the tentacles wriggled inside his ass. “You’re taking my tentacles so well! You’re safe here, just give in like you want to, you’ll feel so good.”

“Fuck, fuck, fuck- I-” George cut himself off with a cry, curses and moans and gasps spilling from his lips as a third, thinner tentacle forced its way inside him, writhing against the others with an obscene squelching sound. Dream praised him with a light squeeze around his waist, long tongue licking out to curl under George’s chin and press against his neck, making him shiver violently.

Everything was building up, the movement of the tentacles inside George combining with the paralyzing heat and pleasure, the sweet smell of honeysuckle and fruit and the aching pressure deep in his belly, and as George whined and sunk into the pleasure, choking out sobs and moans, he was finally rewarded. The cold slickness of a tentacle slithered around his throbbing cock, wrapping around the member and squeezing gently, pulsing against his skin.

“You’re so close George, you’ve done so well. I knew you’d be perfect for this. You’ll be so beautiful once I’m finished with you. Do you want to cum, darling?”

George’s head swam. He nodded frantically, words lost to the haze.

“Good boy.”

The tentacle around him shifted, enveloping the head of his cock in cool gel, and George was gone.

He came with a loud, broken moan, hips stuttering, jerking up into the tentacle’s hold, the appendage continuing to move on his cock and milking his orgasm out of him. He whimpered and shrunk in on himself as pleasure turned into overstimulation, and the tentacles all slowly released their grip on him and slipped away, retreating to Dream’s sides and leaving George to sigh and relax into Dream’s firm hold.

He felt tired, drained of all his energy and lightheaded, but relieved he wasn’t enduring inescapable heat and arousal any longer. His mind was definitely less foggy than it had been, his thoughts slowly slotting themselves together like puzzle pieces, but as weariness sunk through his bones he decided he’d leave the thinking for when he next woke up. This sleepiness at least felt natural, not spurred on by sweet scents of flowers and fruit, and George felt safe enough to let himself drift to sleep here. Of course, had his mind been a little clearer, instincts less clouded by pleasure and fatigue, perhaps he’d have had a second thought, been less quick to go with his sleep-addled brain’s desire to trust the very non-human arms that cradled him. As it was right now though...

“Mm, thank you Dream...” George mumbled his thanks into thick fur, a soft smile gracing his face, his eyes slipping closed.

A quiet chuckle sounded in response.

“I’ll see you when you wake up. Sleep well, Georgie.”

all alone the silence echoes endlessly

Chapter Notes

tw // force-feeding, brief choking and hypnotism in this chapter!

He was floating. Body weightless, he drifted. Where was he? It didn't matter. His senses were of light, of smoke like mist, of clouds and wide open fields and water crystal clear. A faint smell, sweet like honey. A faint rumble, like the thunder over the town he used to call home. A faint glow, like fireflies above a lake or lanterns along a trail. A feeling of contentment, of comfort, of belonging. He was floating. He was floating, floating, floating.... Falling. He was falling, the air slipping past him, weightlessness slipping from his grasp. He was falling, and he didn't know where or why or how. He was falling, falling, falling-

George awoke suddenly with a gasp, his consciousness snapping back into place in his body and his limbs jerking involuntarily, only held back by something curled around them. He took a moment to let himself wake up fully, steadying his breathing and feeling his heartbeat slow down to its normal tempo before he glanced around, his eyes adjusting to the dim glowing light around him.

Wait.

Memories flooded back to him in a frantic rush, and George started to panic as the realisation hit him that he was still underground in an old ruined temple, in the lair of a bloodthirsty monster almost twice his size, and that he was no longer being held, sleepy and comfortable, against said monster's warm chest. In fact, he was starting to feel the slight chill of the air against his still-naked body, his bare skin exposed and vulnerable. He tried tucking his arms in to cover himself, only to feel them restrained firmly above his head, and he looked up with a dawning horror to see tentacles seemingly emerging from the ceiling wrapped tightly around his wrists and forearms, his hands clenching uselessly in their hold. His muscles were starting to ache from the strain of being held up, and he squirmed uncomfortably, tugging at the snake-like bonds in an attempt to free himself, only for them to pull back sharply, making George yelp and flinch with pain. A glance downwards confirmed that yep, his legs were similarly pinned down, though at least he was standing on his own feet.

George slumped a little in defeat. He had been hoping that the slime that coated the tentacles would make it easier to slip his hands out of their grasp, but the ones curled around him were just smooth, not slimy like the ones that went... Inside him last night. He felt a flush creep up his face at the memory of his ass clenching around the tentacles as they twisted and pulsed against his most sensitive spots. How- Exactly how desperate had he been to get off that he so willingly accepted the idea of being tentacle fucked? That sweet smell... How potent had it been? He had felt like his body was burning up and he was more aroused than he had ever been, and his head was so fuzzy, haze clouding his thoughts. So how did he remember it all with such clarity now? It was all still so vivid in his mind that he could almost still feel the tentacles around and inside him, the claws against his skin, the tongue against his neck.

His blush deepened and George shook his head frantically, trying to dispel the thoughts somehow. He didn't need to get turned on again, not when he couldn't move and had no idea what happened

or where Dream might be.

Thrashing around again, George made another desperate attempt to pull his limbs free of the tentacles that bound him, only succeeding in tiring himself out. He sagged, breathing heavily and watching in horror and frustration as the tentacles crept further down his arms, tightening around his forearms as if to discourage him from trying again to escape. What the fuck was happening?

“Dream!” He called out, hoping that maybe the beast that originally lured him here was still lurking somewhere nearby. He’d let him go, right? George hadn’t been eaten yet, so it didn’t seem like Dream was just playing with his food. So why was he still here? Why was he strung up by his arms? This must be a misunderstanding... Right?

Slivers of doubt started to creep into George’s mind as he pieced together the events of last night in his now clear mind, free of the warm, sweet honeysuckle fog that clouded it previously. Dream had said George could stay for one night. Why would he keep him trapped for longer than that? But he said that before everything else that happened, before he dragged George down here and fucked him silly until he passed out from exhaustion, before he... He... He called George darling, good boy, beautiful, perfect. Told him to give in. Told him he’d get to take his cock eventually. Did he mean..? Surely not, why would he-

“Oh Georgeeee, you’re finally awake I see!”

George let out a squeak of surprise as Dream seemingly appeared from nowhere, dropping down through the hole in the centre of the room above and landing easily on all fours with a thump, looking all too wild and dangerous as he stalked slowly towards George like a predator. His grin was too wide, teeth too sharp, fur raising along his back as if in intimidation and tail flicking from side to side behind him, and it suddenly hit George that Dream looked nowhere near as comforting as he did when George was... When he was...

His brain short-circuited, thoughts cutting out as Dream crowded into his space in the dark, looming above the helpless man and raising himself up onto his hind legs once more, forcing George to crane his neck to look up at him.

“Dream I- I’m so confused, I only just woke up. Why am I tied up? What- What happened after I fell asleep?”

“Aw you’re confused? Don’t worry Georgie, I’ll explain it for you!” His tone was eerily cheerful, something more sinister clearly hidden behind his deceptive words. “You’re so cute I just couldn’t bear to eat you and say goodbye so soon. So it’s your lucky day! I’ve got other plans for you, so you get to live here instead! So anyway, after you fell asleep I made sure you couldn’t do something silly like run away or hurt yourself, then I went out into the forest to gather some breakfast for you.”

“Wait, so...” The words sank in slowly, and George struggled to focus on what they meant when Dream was standing so close, flicking his tongue out as if licking his lips. “You- You’re not going to let me go?”

Dream rumbled with a laugh. “Of course not! It’s much better to keep you here where you’re safe and I can do *exactly* what I want with you.”

George’s blood ran cold.

“No... No, no please Dream, you have to let me go, please, I don’t-” He squirmed again, struggling against the tentacles and hearing his own voice crack in his panic. “What do you even

need me for? Am I just a toy or a pet to you? I can't- I- Please, I just want to leave now."

"Oh I'll take care of that, don't you worry Georgie," His smile was unsettling. "And to answer your question... Hmm, I guess you are kind of like a pet right now. But!" He reached forward to run his huge hands down George's bare sides, claws dancing dangerously over the fragile skin and sending a shiver down George's spine. "You're going to be much more than that soon enough. You're special to me, George."

Special?

"W-what do you mean?"

"You want to know, Georgie? Want me to spoil the surprise?"

George nodded shakily, a million possibilities running through his anxious mind.

Dream leaned in, razor-sharp teeth inches from George's head, and his voice dropped to a low murmur that terrified George in a way unlike anything he'd felt before.

"I'm going to breed you. I'm going to get you prepared, all nice and pretty and behaving so well for me, then I'm going to fuck you and knot you and fill you with my pups. I'm going to breed you, George, and you're going to love every second of it."

And with that, he backed away, leaving George in stunned, horrified silence with the ghost sensations of claws still against his skin.

Dream continued, tentacles emerging slowly from his back as he spoke, his voice losing its low, dark tone but not quite returning to the almost sickly sweet cheeriness of before, instead staying careful, unreadable, steady. "So, now you know what's going to happen, I think we should get started, don't you?"

George just shook his head frantically in response, not really trusting himself to say anything, or for Dream to not take advantage of anything he did say. He tried to shrink in on himself, but found it impossible with the way he was restrained, and could only duck his head in refusal to meet Dream's gaze as the beast took a step forward towards him once more.

"George. Georgie. Look at me."

No response.

"George." Dream's voice dropped low, dangerous again.

George's silence was broken by a sound somewhere between a gasp and a yelp as Dream reached out to grab hold of his entire head, forcing it back easily with a grip on either side of his skull. George could feel the tickle of Dream's fur brushing the back of his neck, and his breath came out hot and heavy against the claws pinched around his cheeks, threatening to break the skin and tear him to shreds with a single move. His head swam, and distantly he could feel something cool and smooth wrap itself around his neck. He snapped back to reality just in time to see another tentacle come up in front of his face, the very tip of it oozing with something thick and creamy-coloured. He looked at it for a second in panic, then up to Dream, questioning.

"You're going to open your mouth and take everything that I give you, and you're going to swallow it all down like a good boy and be grateful for it," Dream pushed the tentacle further towards George, pressing it against his lips. "And if you don't open up for me, I'm going to squeeze your pretty little neck until you do."

George whimpered in fear, feeling the pressure around his neck suddenly tighten, reaffirming Dream's threat. He continued to press his lips shut, trying to hold out against the tentacle for as long as he could. He didn't know what the fuck that thing was trying to feed him, and he wasn't just going to obey the monster so easily, despite the obvious danger.

Dream growled in warning, and George felt his neck be squeezed even tighter, cutting off his air supply entirely. He was getting lightheaded very quickly, and in fear of passing out he gave up and opened his mouth to gasp for breath.

The second he parted his lips, the tentacle seized its chance and darted forwards, shoving itself deep into his throat.

George screamed, the sound muffled as the tentacle filled his mouth, forcing his lips to widen around it. He breathed heavily through his nose, tears gathering in the corners of his closed eyes, and he shuddered violently, silent sobs racking his body. He opened his eyes to meet Dream's gaze through his tears, and the monster just smiled, loosening his grip on George's head to instead stroke his hair with surprising gentleness.

"You're such a good boy Georgie. See, that wasn't so hard, was it? Swallow it all now darling, you're going to look so beautiful."

George gagged, choking through his sobs as he felt the tentacle push itself deeper and start pulsing, thick liquid pumping from it and slipping easily down his throat, unimpeded by his gag reflex as he was forced to just take whatever it was giving him. He shook his head weakly but the tentacle stayed lodged in his mouth, and his sobbing gave way to quiet crying as he felt his stomach fill, his hands clenching and unclenching in their bonds. He looked up at Dream again, silently begging for it to be over.

"There's a good boy. It's almost over darling, can you feel it starting to take effect?" He let go of George's head to take hold of the man's body instead, pulling George up into his arms and cradling him against his chest, the tentacles around George's ankles releasing their grip so Dream could pull his legs up to make him more comfortable. His arms were still raised up above his head, held there securely by the tentacles in the ceiling, but George found himself relishing the small amount of comfort he was given. His body was aching, new, strange pressures beginning to form in his head and lower back, and his jaw was getting tired where it was stretched open around the tentacle still in his throat.

Eventually the tentacle slowly loosened itself from George's neck and mouth, sliding back up and out of his throat, leaving a smear of the creamy liquid across his tongue as it exited his mouth. It tasted somewhat like cum, salty and bitter, and George hastily swallowed it down with a wince, coughing at the feeling of it sliding down his now sore throat. The pain and pressure in his lower back was spreading down to his ass, tight and uncomfortable like his muscles were cramping, and his head felt like nails had been driven into his skull. What was that stuff doing to him?

He buried his face into Dream's fur, exhausted from whatever had just happened, drained of tears and sore all over. His throat hurt, and his voice came out tired and hoarse as he mumbled out a question to Dream. "Why did you make me swallow that? What... What is it doing to me?"

"It's making you ready for me Georgie, you'll see soon enough. Anyway, you've been so good. You can have your breakfast now, you deserve some food to keep you nice and pretty," He brushed one hand down George's body, resting on his ass and squeezing the soft flesh gently. He licked his lips, a hunger of a different kind flashing in his eyes. "And healthy. I gathered you some things from the forest earlier, here, let me go get them."

George squirmed at the squeeze of his ass, but whined softly at the loss of contact as Dream placed him back down onto the cold stone floor, the same tentacles from before immediately twining around his legs once more, pinning his feet down. He shivered at the whisper of cool air across his bare skin; he missed the warmth of the monster's body.

Realisation hit him like ice cold water, and he began struggling against the hold of the tentacles with increased vigour. No! He shouldn't be missing the beast that was keeping him captive, he shouldn't be craving its touch, he shouldn't be begging for it to come hold him close again. He should... He should want it as far away as possible, he should be thinking of nothing but possible ways to escape, to run far, far away from here and back to the safety of human civilization. He could think now! His head was clear, he could, he could...

He saw Dream turn back towards him from the far corner of the room he had been rummaging in. George could faintly make out a pile of seemingly random items over there; eating utensils, rags and clothes among scattered discarded bags and bones, and he realised with a sinking feeling in his gut that oh, those were definitely the remains and belongings of other travellers, every one of them apparently having met a fate much worse than George. As Dream came closer now, George could see he was holding a wooden bowl filled with some dark blue or purple-ish mush, and George began to panic at the thought of being force fed something else. Would it put him in more pain? Would it be drugged? He thrashed around and pulled on his restraints again, achieving nothing except tiring himself out more.

"No, no no please, I can't do this again, please. Dream! Please I don't want-"

Dream shushed him, placing the bowl down on the floor and moving in to hold George's waist in one hand, and cupping his head gently with the other. "You need to calm down Georgie, I don't want you hurting yourself. The food is just a mixture of berries and roots from the forest, there's nothing in there to make you sick. I need you to eat, darling. Here, look at me."

George's chest tightened, something fluttering deep within him that he didn't want to think about too much. Why was Dream being so gentle with him? He hesitantly turned his gaze upwards towards Dream, meeting eyes with him and being rewarded with a soft squeeze around his waist. Keeping eye contact with Dream was strange as the beast didn't seem to have any pupils underneath the steady glow, but George soon found it difficult to look away.

"Good boy, that's it, just keep looking at me."

George didn't think he could have torn his eyes away from Dream's if he tried. Their glow had softened, making it easier to see their pale green colour, patterned with subtle intricate swirls of a darker shade and speckled with sparkles like stars. Dream's eyes were mesmerising, and George found that staring into them became more comforting. He calmed down, tension seeping out of him. The pain that had bothered him before faded into the background, and he let himself relax, leaning more into Dream's touch as the racing thoughts in his mind slowed to a still, retreating to the back of his head and leaving him with an easy contentment, something like a freedom within his own body. He felt like he was floating despite everything, and he relaxed into the tentacles' hold, his muscles loosening and letting him hang there comfortably. Dream held him up easily with his grip still around George's body, and George distantly wondered if Dream would hold him with that much care more often.

"You okay now Georgie?" Dream's face had softened into a smile, and George nodded dumbly, his head buzzing pleasantly with a comforting feeling not unlike sleepiness. "My sweet good boy. Here," Dream took his hand off George's head, reaching down to scoop the bowl off the ground again and holding it up to George's face, nudging the edge of the bowl against his lips. "Eat up,

darling.”

George complied easily, willingly parting his lips, and at that moment he felt the tentacles wrapped around his arms loosen, snaking away and allowing him to pull his arms back down. He curled his hands around the bowl in front of him, one hand on top of Dream’s enormous fingers, and Dream cooed at him as he tipped the bowl forward slowly to let the contents of the bowl slip down into his open mouth. The mush was sweet and creamy, the consistency of mashed potatoes or a thick soup, and it tasted heavenly to George in that moment, exhausted and hungry as he was. He cleaned the bowl out obediently, then looked back up to Dream, the monster making a soft noise and placing the empty bowl down before pulling George up into his arms.

“Mmm... Dream m’ sleepy, I-” The words took a herculean effort to say, George’s brain fuzzy and the filter to his mouth not quite working, and he quickly gave up, opting to just nuzzle his head into the thick fur on Dream’s chest instead, grabbing weakly at the beast’s hand with his limbs feeling like they were stuffed with cotton wool instead of flesh and muscle.

“I know Georgie. Do you wanna sleep now? You can choose, do you want to sleep with me or with my tentacles?”

A choice. It was an easy one.

“You! Wanna sleep with you- Warm, soft, I- Mm.. Please Dream.”

“Of course, darling.”

Dream carried him over to another corner of the room, holding George tightly to his chest as he lay down on his back on a pile of leaves and straw, settling and getting comfortable before curling his tail up and over the both of them, the weight across his back providing George with an odd sense of satisfaction and security, only amplified when Dream draped his hand across George too.

“You’ve been such a good boy today,” Dream dipped his head to nuzzle his snout gently against George’s cheek. “I can’t wait to see you start to change for me, I just know you’ll look amazing.”

George just hummed contentedly in response, closing his eyes and snuggling into Dream, who chuckled, lightly stroking George’s back.

“Sleep well, Georgie.”

on and again we settle into the high

Chapter Notes

tw // transformation

i advise anyone reading to check the tags before reading, i update them before every chapter!

enjoy <3

He woke up. Slowly this time, stirring from his slumber and blearily blinking the last vestiges of sleep from the corners of his eyes, feeling steadily creeping back into his heavy limbs.

He woke up, and everything hurt.

Aches that he hadn't even noticed the night previous now made their presence very much felt, muscle cramps in his legs and arms, and deep in the pit of his stomach. He shifted slightly and sharp spikes of pain shot up from his lower back, and George let out an involuntary whimper, curling in on himself and silently begging for relief from that and the fierce headache pounding somewhere between the front and top of his skull.

The other thing George noticed, even through his dizzying pain, was that he was alone. The straw that formed a bed below him was cool, so Dream must have been gone for a while at least, and George found himself missing the warmth and comfort of being snuggled up to the monster's body.

He carefully pushed himself up halfway to a sitting position, wincing at the way every tiny movement made his body scream in protest before he collapsed once more onto his side, shaking with the effort and agony. He clenched his eyes shut tightly, covering his face with his hands and trying not to cry. Everything hurt, and he couldn't tell where his body started and ended anymore. His own senses were blurred, everything aching and hazy and sensitive, his head pounding and stomach twisting, back hurting like his spine had been stretched until it had snapped in two and then been hastily pushed back together.

Everything hurt, and he was alone.

Something cold and smooth prodded at the skin of his side, and George flinched slightly before relaxing again as much as he could, slackening his tense body and allowing several tentacles to come up from the floor beneath and curl around him loosely, not pinning him tightly down like they did before, but rather just resting there with him. George appreciated feeling them there in lieu of the touch of their owner. It was odd, knowing that he wasn't restrained right now and could probably have got up and tried to escape, but he didn't feel able to even stand up, and was instead laying there desperately hoping Dream would return soon and help him with the pain.

George didn't know how long he was laying there for, not with his senses so muddled in darkness and pain, time having been previously lost somewhere amongst sweet smells and glowing green and the touch of strong hands. Eventually though, the familiar faint scent of flowers and honey drifted into the room, and George cracked his eyes open in time to see Dream drop down through

the hole in the roof, hands full carrying something. George made a quiet, distressed noise and reached his arms out towards Dream, and the beast turned to look at him, crouching to place down the objects he was carrying before standing up and padding softly over to the nest, gathering George up carefully in his arms and pulling him close, smiling when George clung to him like a lifeline.

“Dream where did you go? I woke up and you weren’t here and it hurts...” Tears gathered in his eyes and George let them flow freely, not holding back from crying from the pain and loneliness. “Why does it hurt so much? My back, and, and- my head, and my... My ass...”

“Shh Georgie, darling, it’s okay, I’m here now. See?” He stroked an enormous hand gently down George’s back. “I know you’re in pain, you’re doing so well. I can help you now.” He guided George’s face to his neck. “This will make it hurt less. Breathe in for me, there’s my good boy.”

George froze for a second before he relaxed and buried his face into the fur on Dream’s neck, taking a deep breath and immediately being hit full force with the saccharine smell of cherry blossom and strawberries; different from the previous scents, less intense. He continued breathing it in, letting the strange feeling of warmth wash over him, settling under his skin. It numbed the sharpest pain somewhat, leaving him much more comfortable with only the aching cramps still lingering. Some part of his conscious mind shouted its protests at how easily he gave in and accepted the drugged air into his lungs, but it was quickly drowned out by the overwhelming relief of no longer being in agony, and he went placid in Dream’s arms as the monster hushed and cooed at him.

“Good boy! Did you see your new additions yet? They’re the reason you hurt so much.”

“Mm, no?” George shook his head, confused about what Dream meant and more distracted by the way a warmth was settling in his belly, flames of arousal flickering to life deep within him. Was it because of the scent, or was it something else?

“Look,” Dream said, shifting George’s position in his arms and stroking his hand down George’s back again, not stopping when he got to the lower back, but rather continuing down, eliciting a surprised noise from George when he felt the touch of Dream’s fingers on a part of him that *definitely* hadn’t been there before. Dream gently pulled it out from behind him, into George’s field of vision, and petted it lightly.

George’s eyes widened.

He had a *tail*.

It wasn’t very big, for now at least, but it was long enough that he could see it poking out from his back, and he wondered how he hadn’t noticed it until now. It was thicker at the base but thinned out as it got longer, it lacked the glowing spade at the end that Dream’s tail had, and it was coated in short brown fur, darker than Dream’s fur to match the shade of George’s own hair. He very cautiously reached out to touch it, like he couldn’t believe it actually belonged to him, and flinched back a bit when he felt the touch of his own hand through the tail.

“Wh- what..?”

“Isn’t it pretty? You look so good, Georgie. And that’s not the only thing!”

Dream grasped George’s wrist in between his thumb and forefinger, and George let his hand be guided up to his own head, where Dream pressed it carefully against... A horn? George hesitantly moved his hand around, and yes, there were now two small horns emerging from his head, peeking

out through his hair. They were hard and had a smooth texture not dissimilar to his fingernails, but George could still feel himself touching them, and the sensation struck George with something between fear and fascination. He withdrew his hand quickly, staring wide-eyed at his fingers like he expected them to be changed in some way too.

“You look beautiful,” Dream hummed, nuzzling George’s cheek softly and stroking his new tail. “Of course, growing these makes you hurt, but isn’t it worth it? Just a little longer and they’ll be fully grown, and you’ll be so beautiful for me. All mine.”

George whimpered, the possessiveness of Dream’s statement sending tingles like sparks dancing under his skin. The light strokes down his tail were continuing, and the odd sensation of having a new limb had been slowly replaced by a pleasant warmth. Steadily, George came to a stinging realisation. It felt *good*. The attention from Dream kept him distracted from the aching cramps lingering in his body, and the slight pain turned into a burning sensitivity that sent shocks of arousal straight to his crotch whenever Dream’s hands brushed over a tender spot.

“Oh I do love the way you tremble when I touch you like that. It feels good, doesn’t it George? Having a tail like me? Now,” His grip suddenly tightened around the base of George’s tail and on his back, hiking the man further up his chest to rest his head comfortably on Dream’s shoulder, then holding him in place there, letting him squirm for a moment before he ceased his futile struggling and slumped against Dream again, shivers running through him whenever Dream lightly squeezed his new tail. “It’s not over yet, is it Georgie? You still need a little more to complete the transformation. So come on, open your pretty mouth for me.”

George tensed up in fear when he saw the same thick, oozing tentacle that he had been forced to choke on before once again raising itself up in front of his face, and he tried turning his head away from its advance. Dream squeezed his hands around George’s body in warning, and as he felt his tail twitch in Dream’s grip, George decided that it wasn’t worth the distress to fight against it this time. Whatever that creamy stuff was, it had already given him a fucking tail and horns. What more could it do to him? And so George slowly opened his mouth, reluctantly allowing the tentacle to slip through his parted lips and over his tongue, nestling itself deep in his throat. He squeezed his eyes shut and whined around the intrusion, resisting the urge to gag on it. It felt humiliating to be so helpless, to have his mouth used and filled like that with no other option. As the tentacle started pulsing and pumping more thick liquid into him, though, George found it less comforting to ponder the embarrassing nature of the situation, and more to instead focus on the way his throat bulged out slightly, the warmth in his belly sank lower and burned hotter, and his cock began to harden where it was pressed in between his own thigh and Dream’s body. It seemed Dream felt it too, because he chuckled and loosened his grip on George’s tail to instead grope at his ass, eliciting a choked whimper from the defenseless man.

“Such a good boy. It might start to hurt again soon, but it’s okay. You’re alright, I’m here with you.”

No, no not more pain. Not again. George squirmed again, eyes wide, struggling against the tentacle in his mouth and trying his best to pull his head away. He could feel his aches twinging again, intense prickling seeping into the cramping discomfort, facade of cool relief cracking like porcelain. It burned; his changed body, his new limbs. A tingling sensation like pins and needles settled around his crotch and ass, and he wriggled, unsure of whether he wanted to get as far away from Dream and the tentacles as possible, or throw himself in deep, craving closeness and pleasure and relief from the agony.

He could feel himself slipping, and it terrified him.

George's internal conflict was casting his tender confused emotions into disarray, and he almost lamented the loss when the tentacle feeding him finally slipped out of his throat and withdrew from his mouth once more. He flexed his jaw, feeling oddly empty. Dream petted his hair then moved across the room to where he'd left the things he'd brought in earlier, holding George effortlessly with one arm while he reached down with the other.

"Here, I got you more food and water. You're probably hungry and thirsty by now, right? I'll always look after you, darling, you know that."

Did he know that? Yes. No. Of course he did? Of course he didn't. Dream was a monster keeping him trapped here, he couldn't trust him. But oh, he so badly wanted to. He wanted to give in, to lose himself and to trust Dream more than he trusted even his own mind. Wait, why? Why was he thinking that still? Could he even trust his own mind anymore? His head hurt. George craved the sweet haze, the one that kept him from thinking, kept him in comfort and warmth and the bliss of an empty head. He craved it. Everything hurt.

Regardless, he accepted the gentle treatment when Dream pressed the bowls of food and water to his lips, cheeks flushing a little at how he was being fawned over. He was so dependent on Dream for survival right now, it should feel demeaning, humiliating. It only felt good.

He willingly let himself be fed.

Something tucked away at the back of his head screamed at him. This should feel deeply, deeply wrong. This was dangerous, the speed at which he was accepting and even *wanting* and *enjoying* this, this feeling of being wanted and doted on and taken care of and... and *loved*.

He only wanted more.

It terrified him.

Dream finished feeding him and dropped the empty bowls back into the pile of dead mans' belongings with a clatter, then scooped George's body up in his arms, nuzzling him fondly. George shivered. He might still be sore, but every time Dream touched him it felt more soothing, reassuring, right, distracting from the pain, making a fire of a different kind burn bright and hot within him. Dream was so big. George recognised how easily Dream could crush him with his huge hands, tear him apart with his claws sharp as knives, eat him alive with teeth as long as George's fingers. He could break him so, so easily, but he never did. He held George gently instead, pulled him close, stroked him. He handled George like he was made of glass, precious and beautiful and worth caring for, and it made George feel special, prized, made his chest flutter with something more than nerves, something light and pretty that filled George with altogether more fear than the mere threat of dying to some monster in the woods. Something terrifying.

One of Dream's hands trailed lower down the curve of George's back, over the smooth swell of his ass where it squeezed the smooth soft flesh, and down further, to where one finger brushed over the rim of his hole, and George let out a loud involuntary whine, shuddering and letting the lingering arousal wash over him in waves. Why was the sensation so much more intense than it had ever been before?

Dream gave a satisfied hum.

George suddenly found his upper body being dropped backwards, and he yelped in shock before he was caught by something behind him, his arms and torso being entangled in snake-like tentacles hanging down from the ceiling. They held him up and supported his weight suspended above the ground, while Dream kept hold of his legs, hands wrapping easily around each of his thighs to lift

his lower body up more.

“Let’s take a look at you darling, I can already feel you’re almost there with the next part of your changes. Can you feel it yet?”

Dream dipped his head down then, spreading George’s legs a little wider and nudging his snout in between them, pressing his nose close to the skin just above George’s hole, under his balls. George shivered at the cold and slightly rough texture, but shifted his attention to the way his hole was starting to feel warm and strangely... wet. He clenched around the odd sensation and tried not to get flustered over the way the vibrations from Dream’s low chuckle travelled up through his cock.

“You can feel it now? You’re getting so slick for me Georgie,” His hot breath ghosted over George’s ass. “You smell so good.”

George tried unsuccessfully to suppress an embarrassing moan that tore out of him when he felt Dream’s tongue, hot and wet and bigger even than George’s own fingers, licking out against his rim. It felt a lot like the tentacles, smooth and slippery, but it was so *warm*. George bucked his hips trying to push into the sensation, but he was left writhing against Dream’s unrelenting grip, unable to move an inch and having to instead just take whatever was given to him.

Dream hummed and spoke again, his tone deep and seductive and downright *filthy*. “You taste delicious too.”

He licked out at George’s hole again, sending a full-body shudder through the helpless man and forcing another pretty noise to spill from his lips. Dream drank it up like water, rumbling in content and squeezing George’s thighs, rewarding the way he keened and leaned into the touch by pressing the very tip of his tongue inside George’s tight, wet heat. He steadily worked it deeper inside, going slow enough to tease, savouring George’s taste, the way he’d throw his head back as he moaned, the way his hole would tighten slightly around his tongue before leaking more slick. It mixed with Dream’s saliva, making obscene noises as Dream slowly thrust his tongue in and out, opening George up, pushing deeper with each thrust.

George was in heaven. Hands clenching and unclenching into fists, he writhed, twisting in his bonds, mewling moans and keens spilling from him with every curl of Dream’s tongue inside him. He was surrounded, drowning, enveloped in electric pleasure and that all-encompassing heat, sweat shining on the surface of his skin and nerves buzzing underneath, panting and moaning, hips stuttering and jerking against Dream’s mouth, his thighs aflame where the beast’s hands were wrapped tightly around them, claws threatening to break the skin with every slight shift. The pain was ignored now, too deeply buried beneath layers and layers of bliss. He drank it in greedily, euphoric self-indulgence leaving any conscious thought like dust in its wake. He wanted more, more, more. Sounds of sex like a symphony, he was the entire orchestra; his body sang with each caress, each lick, each brush of knife-sharp claws over smooth expanses of skin.

Dream pushed his tongue deeper, curling it deliciously against that spot inside him, and George was gone. He screamed as a violent shudder racked through him, crying shamelessly loud and pushing his hips up, begging between moans and through tears.

“Please Dream, please, please I- I need- Ah! I n-need more. M-more, please! It hurts, it hurts but- Mm... *Hhah*- It feels so good, please, please-”

He sobbed with desperation when Dream slowly withdrew his tongue and pulled back, denying George of that final push over the edge that he so badly needed. His cock throbbed, angry and red and leaking against his own stomach.

“It feels good, hm Georgie? You want more? You’re so good, so pretty for me, so open and slick. I think you’re ready to take some of my cock now. Wouldn’t you like that? You’d love to be stretched open around my cock, filled so nicely by me. I know you’d love that, darling.”

Dream released George from the tentacle’s hold and pulled him fully into his own arms in one fell swoop, making George’s head swim. *Strong*, his brain supplied. *Warm*. George shivered with something other than cold, tangling his fingers into Dream’s fur and rutting pathetically against his body. The pain was returning, no longer held back by hands and tongue. George clenched down around nothing, his hole leaking slick. Something deep within him cried out, something urgent and primal and not entirely his own, and he found himself mourning with it. *I need to be filled*.

Dream carried him back over to the nest of leaves and straw, hushing George and cooing softly at him the whole time. He laid down on his back, keeping George huddled close on top of his chest, a mirror of their position from the day before. Was it a day before? Time wasn’t important anymore, not here, not to George, not amongst pleasure and comfort and sweet hazes of green and that all-encompassing warmth.

George revelled in the reassuring weight of Dream’s huge hand resting on his back and pinning him down once more, soaking in the affectionate petting with a dangerous amount of satisfaction. His own tail swished lazily behind him, eventually settling and curling around Dream’s leg. George wasn’t even aware he could move it. Was it longer now than it was before?

He was dragged out of his own thoughts again with a start, jerking in surprise and gripping Dream’s fur tightly when he felt the insistent nudge of something smooth and hot and very, *very big* against his ass. He yelped and looked behind him, peeking over his own shoulder to see Dream’s cock pressing up against him, the tip of it sliding over his slick hole every time Dream shifted his hips, smearing wetness across his skin.

“There’s a good boy... You want this, don’t you? You’re in pain and you want me to help you. You want to be stretched open and filled and fucked on my cock, you want to feel me inside you, you want me to claim you as mine. Don’t you, Georgie?”

No... No, he wasn’t going to admit-

“Yes! Yes please, please Dream,” He sobbed, words laced with desperation, with pain, with longing for something he’d never had before, with the guilt and hesitation of a man who knew he wasn’t far from breaking. “Need it, need you- Inside me, please,” His cock was trapped, aching and red, in between his stomach and Dream’s body, and he rutted his hips up into the friction. “Need you, want you, please. It hurts.”

He wasn’t even drugged.

“Good boy.”

Dream smiled, gripped George tightly in his hands, and pushed him down onto his cock.

George almost passed out as he felt it start to enter him. It was painfully big, stretching him so wide; wider than Dream’s tongue, wider than any of the tentacles. It slid inside him torturously slow, Dream taking his time to adjust his grip on George’s hips before pushing him down another half an inch. And as the pressure within him finally tipped over the edge, George came, his mouth hanging open in a silent scream, shaking violently and fisting his hands tightly into Dream’s fur, scared to move at all for fear of being torn open with the sheer size of Dream’s cock. He loved it. It was unfair how much he loved it. The closeness, the intimacy, the way he could hear Dream praising him gently through the ringing in his ears, the dizzying euphoria, the desire for more

thrumming under his skin. He was in rapture, lost to the pure, raw emotion of it all, the pain completely forgotten.

“You’re so beautiful,” Dream released his strong grip, moving his hands from George’s hips to instead stroke gently through his hair and down his back and tail. “You’ve taken me so well. I won’t push you any further today darling, it’s okay.”

George stole a glance over his shoulder again to where he was stretched tightly around Dream, and felt lightheaded at the sight that greeted him. He wasn’t even halfway down. It can’t have been more than a few inches inside him, and yet he felt *so full*. He turned and buried his face into Dream’s fur, whimpering as his muscles clenched involuntarily and his walls pressed down around Dream’s cock.

“Doesn’t it feel good, Georgie?”

“Mmm... Feels- Feels so good Dream, ah-” The words fell out freely in quiet gasps and breathy moans, delirious mumbling more than conscious thought. “I need it, I- I love it,” Confessions tumbling from his mouth, secrets he’d never say while sober cast out, murmured into soft brown fur. “Love the way you hold me, love how your cock fills me- Need more, always need more. I- I love how you make me feel wanted. Love how warm you are. I love- Ah, *hahh*... S-so good.”

Dream laughed, the sound soft and light and making George’s breath catch in his throat. “You’re so pretty. All mine. Are you comfortable here, with me inside you? Let me hold you like this until you fall asleep.”

George hummed sleepily in agreement, snuggling down into Dream’s warm embrace and feeling huge arms wrap around him, pulling him in ever closer. He could stay like this forever, he thought distantly. Here, surrounded by warmth and wanting, filled with heat and endorphins and foreign desires. He cried, overwhelmed with emotion, and sunk himself deeper into Dream’s hold, cuddling close and letting his tears soak into the fur until he ran himself dry. Dream hushed and soothed him through it, gentle pets and caresses to his new tail and kisses to his new horns steadily lulling him into sleep.

Finally, George’s eyes slipped closed, and he sighed into Dream’s fur, slipping into peaceful unconsciousness with Dream’s body close to his, Dream’s arms like a blanket around him, Dream’s cock resting snugly inside him.

Dream smiled and rubbed his hand fondly over George’s head, brushing his hair carefully out of his face with a claw big enough to rip him to shreds.

“My beautiful sweet boy, I knew you were perfect for me. Sleep well Georgie.”

will you say something, can you show me?

Chapter Notes

here's chapter 5 finally! sorry this has taken so long, but it's a nice juicy chapter so i hope you guys will be satisfied...

thanks so much for being patient! <3

// small blood warning in this chapter!

He felt empty.

That was the first thing George noticed as he woke up, fighting his way out of the foggy clutches of sleep. He was empty, he was cold, and he was alone again. He was cradled not in Dream's warm arms, nor even in the relentless grip of the bright green tentacles, but rather was lying curled up in the nest of straw in the corner of the dark ruin, his tail curled around him and the only light a small blue glow seemingly coming from the horns on his own head. George pushed himself up on his forearms, blinking blearily and shaking his head slightly as if to rid himself of the dreams that had plagued him.

...Dreams.

He was alone.

The room was dark and silent and George was *alone*. The beast keeping him captive wasn't anywhere to be seen at that moment, and as George emerged from sleep and shook off the dregs of unconsciousness, his rational mind immediately snapped to the possibility of escape. It took George a moment to even process the thought, a strangely unfamiliar one. Why... When was the last time he..?

He wasn't drugged right now, he realised. His head was clear, unclouded by green haze and sweet smells and mesmerising eyes that sparkled like stars. He wasn't drowning in the depths of desperate arousal, pain that made him cry out for comfort or pleasure that made him keen under nonhuman hands.

It felt so unfamiliar, so uncomfortable. He was left with nothing but his own thoughts, awareness over his own body and a strange emptiness, a loneliness that begged for him to stay there and wait until he was enveloped in a warm strong, familiar embrace once more.

George took notice, quickly shoving that urge to the back of his mind. He couldn't let himself fall victim to a weakness like that, not now, not when he had a clear mind and a strong body and the chance to finally *think*. The chance to maybe, finally escape. He couldn't let himself yearn for the company of a monster, one that kept him trapped here and drugged him with aphrodisiacs and shaped his body to its sick desires. Its words from the other day (The other week? The other month? Where in time did he exist, now?) drifted into his head, and filled him with cold dread.

"I'm going to breed you, George, and you're going to love every second of it."

What the fuck had Dream meant by that? Breed him? Did he mean... Surely not.

George didn't think he wanted to find out.

He rolled over, pushing himself up to a kneeling position and mentally checking himself over for any possible pains or more new limbs before he slowly dragged himself to his feet. He stood there shakily for a moment, unused to using his legs again after being suspended from tentacles and carried around for however long. His muscles cried out in protest, but George hadn't the time to worry about them now. He didn't know when Dream would be back, and he didn't want to stick around to find out.

You're lying. Some part of him said. You want him to come back, you want him to hold you. You want him to cuddle you and feed you and fu-

"No!" George shouted out loud, shaking his head to expel the thought, surprising himself with how unsure he sounded. He covered his face with his hands, clutching at the strands of hair falling over his forehead. He couldn't fall, he couldn't lose himself, he couldn't. He couldn't let himself get distracted, he couldn't let himself crave the sweet haze and the strong arms and the warm body against his own, he couldn't let himself miss the pet names and the praise and the gentle touches and the feeling of being filled. He couldn't.

He steadied his breathing, shoving those wandering desires to the back of his head and focusing his attention fully on the prospect of being free once more. There had to be a way up to the floor above, then from there he could leave the temple and run far away from... Everything. Whatever this nightmare was.

Looking around in the gloom that his eyes had long since adjusted to, George's gaze flitted over the piles of random jumbled belongings scattered across the floor on the opposite side of the room. His clothes were probably in there - his trousers, anyway, George remembered with a grimace how his shirt had been torn off - but did he have time to go rooting through everything else to find them? A lone skull half-buried in someone else's bloodstained coat stared up at him, and George decided with a queasy feeling in his stomach that he definitely didn't have the time. Turning his attention back to the hole in the ceiling instead, he took notice of several long vines trailing down towards him. They didn't look particularly sturdy, but George didn't exactly have much of a choice, did he? Making his way over to stand beneath them, he jumped to grab hold of the longest, most secure-looking vine that he could. It slipped through his fingers on the first try, a sharp offshoot scraping his hand and making him hiss in pain.

He couldn't fail this. He tried again, managing to grip onto it the second time and dangling for a moment before dropping back down again. Okay. He could do this.

Willing his aching muscles to cooperate, George tried for a third time, grabbing hold of the vine tightly with both hands and pulling himself up off the floor slowly. It was already exhausting, but as his adrenaline kicked into gear George found himself summoning all the upper body strength he had to climb the vine inch by painstaking inch, hands raw and sweaty clinging to the plant for dear life, scrabbling for purchase on the leaves and shoots and dragging his body upwards until he could grip it with his feet too. He was shaking with adrenaline and fatigue and stopped to rest for a few seconds, panting breaths making his chest rise and fall harshly, before he gritted his teeth and began shimmying up the vine once more, finding it easier now he wasn't relying on his hands alone.

It seemed like a painful eternity, but finally the ledge of the upper floor was within reach, and George almost cried with relief as he grabbed the edge of the rough stone and dragged himself up, straining with his own weight until he could pull his legs up, tucking them underneath him and rolling over, collapsing on his back onto the cold stone floor and struggling to adjust to the sudden

light, chest heaving with heavy, ragged breaths as he blinked and squinted against the daylight streaming in through the crumbling archways of the temple. How long had he been trapped in the dark?

He knew he didn't have time to rest though, and he groaned as he got to his feet, the consequences of him pushing his body to its limits suddenly making themselves known through a myriad of new aches and twinges. With adrenaline still buzzing through his veins though, George took a deep breath and stumbled forwards, out of the ruin and into the forest beyond.

It was impossible to ignore the weight of the new horns on his head, nor the tail curling out from his back, and indeed as George's limp turned into a jog, turned into a run, turned into a full-on sprint through the trees, he could feel the appendage behind him swishing furiously, smacking against plants and getting tangled in thickets of thorns until George grabbed hold of it and yanked it to his side with a cry of frustration. It was almost as if it responded to his emotions, confused and frantic and desperate, and as George tripped over roots and stumbled his way through weeds that caught roughly on the bare skin of his legs, he found something within him begging to turn and go back. Why was he running? Where was he going? The outside world was dangerous. Living in the ruined temple was safe, he was protected, he was looked after, he was-

No! Why were these thoughts so hard to dispel? He had to get far away from here, he had to get to a village and find a healer, he had to be away from Dream and his hypnotising eyes and his addictive scent and... And his warmth...

George was cold. He was cold despite the blood pumping through his veins and the sweat trickling down his back. He was completely naked of course, so it wasn't really surprising that he felt the chill of the cool air against his bare skin, but still...

He craved Dream's warmth.

His feet thudded in a clumsy rhythm across the dirt and moss as he ran; small sharp stones and thorns made blood trickle from the bare soles of his feet, and stinging pain to shoot up his nerves, but it went ignored beneath the adrenaline, the fear, the frantic beating of George's heart, the quick breaths that forced their way in and out of his lungs, the deafening silence that echoed around him. He ran and ran, and his muscles screamed at him, exhaustion and the need to rest eventually overcoming his instinct to keep sprinting, to get further away.

He slowed his running to a steady halt, coming to a stop in a cluster of trees so thick their canopies blotted out most of the soft golden light that usually filtered through the leaves, leaving the area shrouded in dusk. A small stream trickled out of a rocky outcrop nearby and wound through the undergrowth past his feet, and George stared at it as he battled with himself, his body trembling.

That little part of his brain was getting louder, chants of '*go back, go back, go back!*' echoing in his mind; '*Dream will look after you!*'. It was getting harder to argue with that part of himself, the part that begged for the security of captivity, the safety of the underground room in the ruin, the protection of inhumanity, the sweetness and the warmth. He was in too deep, much too deep. Freedom was right there, beyond the endless trees, he just had to make it through, had to *run, run, run*. There was nothing he wanted more than freedom. Right? His head was starting to hurt. The chanting wasn't quietening down. He had to *stay, stay, stay*. There was nothing he wanted more than Dream.

George dropped to his knees next to the stream, cupping his hands in the cold, clear water and lifting them up to his face, lapping the water up quickly. It was refreshing, a soothe to his tired body and sore throat. He could feel stones digging into his knees, but ignored them as he drank with greedy relief. At least he could be sure this water wasn't drugged.

Or could he? He didn't know the limits of Dream's powers, he didn't know how much control the monster had over this area. Who's to say he couldn't affect everything in this forest? What if he had drugged this stream? What if this was all part of the sick game he was playing? George couldn't stay here, he still wasn't safe, he couldn't trust anything, he-

He froze, dropping his hands to brace himself on the bank of the stream. He listened.

The quiet whistling of wind. The slight rustle of leaves. Silence. Where was the birdsong?

The snap of a twig.

George didn't hesitate, sheer terror gripping his heart as he scrambled to his feet, splashing through the stream and racing forward again, darting through the trees with a desperate, fearful urgency. Branches snapping and the much louder rustling of leaves added to the drumbeat of his heart pounding against his ribcage, adrenaline pushing him to go faster as he threw himself entirely into flight. He knew he wouldn't have the faintest hope of surviving otherwise, but if he just focused all his energy into getting through the forest, he could maybe, just maybe-

A force suddenly collided with him from behind, and George hit the ground with a pained and terrified yelp, his knees buckling as he was shoved down hard onto his front, his face pressed into the dirt and the breath knocked out of his lungs. He gasped, dizzy from the impact, and struggled to try to lift himself off the ground again before a huge clawed hand landed on his back, roughly shoving him back down and pinning him there firmly, the claws digging into his skin harshly enough to draw blood. A growl sounded close to his ear, hot breath landing on the back of his head, and George whimpered pitifully and stopped struggling, letting himself cry instead as he gave in and accepted his fate. Dream had caught him, he'd be furious, he was being nice to George while he was behaving but now he'd probably just kill him. He should have never tried to escape.

The worst thing was that George felt *relieved*. The part of him that had begged to turn around and go back to Dream was winning out now, rejoicing in the joyful closeness to the beast, making George's skin flush with warmth under the hold of his captor, finding comfort in the claws that bled him. He craved more, more closeness, more comfort, more sweetness and warmth. He missed not having to think. He missed the safety of the ruins. He missed being filled. He missed Dream. As much as he had tried his hardest to escape, to fight his way out of the depraved desires, all he was doing was slipping deeper.

"That was very silly of you, wasn't it darling?" Dream's voice purred deeply into his ear, the tone of his voice unreadable. "Why did you try to run from me, Georgie?"

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry Dream! I didn't- I..." George sobbed brokenly, heaving breaths between each word made harder by the pressure crushing down on his back and trapping his chest against the forest floor. His cries grew almost hysterical as he pleaded, sentences formed almost entirely of desperate begs and making little sense even to himself. "I'm sorry I'm sorry I- Please don't- Please, please Dream, don't- Don't kill me I'm sorry please don't kill me-"

"Kill you? Why would I do that?" Dream's claws dug a little deeper into his flesh, enough that George could feel small rivulets of blood trickling down his sides, staining the dirt below him.

"I- I ran away, I thought you might- You're not angry I tried to run? I thought you'd kill me if you caught me, I- I don't- I'm sorry, please, please Dream."

"Oh I'm very angry Georgie, you could have gotten hurt, and then what would I have done? I told you, you're safe at home where I can protect you. Running away was a very silly thing to do," He shifted, not digging his claws into George quite so much, but keeping a bruising grip around his

body as he lifted him off the ground, dangling him in a way that George could see every single one of Dream's sharp teeth as he spoke. "But I'm not going to kill you. I'd never do that darling, I'd never hurt my mate like that."

"But..." *You're hurting me right now*, a little voice in his head tried to say. It went unspoken. Dream wasn't going to kill him? He had been fully expecting to be torn to shreds as soon as Dream hunted him down; punishment for even thinking of trying to escape. Why did he think he even stood a chance in the first place?

You didn't even need to run, a different voice said. *You didn't really want to escape, did you?*

The thoughts felt so cold, cold like the loneliness and the empty forest around him and the sweat on his skin. Cold like the absence of Dream. *You're slipping again*. George remembered with an icy shock the reason he'd tried to escape in the first place, and with a rush of panic, he struggled in the monster's grip again. Dream's eyes narrowed in response, and in an instant George had a tentacle wrapped tightly around his neck, Dream pulling him in closer and placing his other hand on the back of George's head to shove his face against Dream's neck, far less gentle in his treatment now than he'd been before.

"Breathe in for me darling?" It wasn't a question, and as the tentacle squeezed around his throat, George knew he wasn't being given an option either. He gave in and inhaled the drugged air.

He remembered the scent; it was the familiar mix of honeysuckle and fruit, rich and sweet, as intoxicating and addictive as it had been the very first time he'd smelled it. It seemed far stronger this time, and as it swirled in his lungs George felt the rush of heat through his body hit him like a tsunami, intense arousal crashing over him and drowning him in desperate need that clung to him like honey, burning syrup in his veins. A choked whine slipped from his lips, and he tried to reach out to draw himself closer against Dream's body, only to be roughly yanked away again, his arms bound together by another tentacle and forced down behind his back, pulling on his shoulders. The one still around his neck stopped squeezing, but remained tight enough to be an uncomfortable reminder not to struggle again as Dream slung George over his shoulder and onto his back, leaving him disoriented and dizzy with arousal, rendered immobile by more of the snake-like appendages curling up to wrap around his body and bind him there.

"We're going home now Georgie, okay? I'll punish you there."

George nodded weakly with his face pressed against the soft fur of Dream's back, neither feeling able to nor trusting himself to respond verbally. At least this was more comfortable, more comforting, warmer, than lying and bleeding into the cold dirt ground. That's what it kept coming down to, wasn't it? The comfort, the warmth, the closeness to his captor. That's why he kept slipping, that's why he hadn't managed to escape; the temptation to give in for good, to accept everything given to him and to enjoy Dream's gentle touches and constant praise, that temptation was set in his mind, not budging no matter how much he tried to drive it out.

Dream turned back and set off in what George guessed was the direction of the ruins. He hadn't exactly taken much notice of exactly which way he was running while trying to escape, but Dream clearly wasn't lost, taking a very sure path through the woods, dropping onto all fours to run faster, leaping over rock formations and launching himself off trees at a pace that left George breathless, wishing he could hold on to Dream for extra security, fear thrumming through his blood alongside the still-overwhelming lust.

George wasn't sure how long it took, his brain too fogged over with a haze of sweet green, but eventually he saw the ruined temple come into view over Dream's shoulder, crumbling stone archways peeking through the dense foliage. George tried not to cry with relief at the sight of

familiarity.

Home, his traitorous brain supplied.

Dream ducked through the doorway and made his way to the centre of the room, dropping off the ledge down into the pit that led to the dusky shade of the underground floor below. George relaxed into the warm relief of being in familiar surroundings, then abruptly tensed up again as he felt the tentacles wrapped around him withdraw, being replaced by Dream's hand and claws once more, his hold no more gentle now than when he'd caught him. He dragged George off his back and dropped him onto the stone floor, the cold slabs an almost soothing contrast to the searing heat of George's skin. Dream wasted no time in pinning the helpless man down again, bruising grip on his chest and stomach pressing his back into the unforgiving stone.

George shivered, trying to squeeze his thighs together as he felt slick leak from his hole, unable to stop his body from reacting to the heat coursing through him and the way Dream was manhandling him around with little of the same care he'd shown him before. Dream was treating George more roughly than he ever had, and while George missed the gentle caresses and sweet praise, in his haze the barely-held back strength in Dream's more aggressive movements was sparking that fire deep in his belly, smoke seeping through his syrup veins.

Dream kept George pinned easily with one hand on his torso, his other hand dragging its claws down George's trembling body, leaving angry red trails across smooth expanses of pale skin until it reached his thighs, forcing them apart and holding them there. Cool air hit George's hot, slick hole almost immediately and he whimpered, trying to lift his hips up towards Dream, silently begging. The heat and haze had clouded his mind almost completely by this point, rational thought replaced by the desperate, primal need to be filled. Dream hummed, "You're so pretty Georgie, it's a shame you had to misbehave."

A tentacle shoved itself inside his slick hole, sliding in with little resistance and stretching him open so fast the moan that escaped him sounded more like a choke or a sob, a discordant sound somewhere between satisfaction and pain. He was being filled, the tentacle was thrusting in and out of him quickly, forcing him further open, but still he wasn't sated, the prospect of more taunting his lust-addled mind.

Dream withdrew the tentacle then, still not looking directly at George, but rather at his dripping hole. "I think you're ready for my cock, aren't you Georgie? I'm sure if you weren't so keen for it, you would have thought for a bit longer before trying to run from me, wouldn't you?" He finally made eye contact with George, an unsettling smile present on his face. "I know you didn't mean it, darling. That's why you're going to accept your punishment like a good boy."

Something within George still protested. *No!* It cried out desperately. *You don't want it, it's going to hurt, it's going to-*

It didn't matter what it said.

Dream's grip on George tightened, claws scratching bleeding lines into his skin as Dream lined himself up and pushed in roughly, ignoring the way George's mouth fell open in a scream, one that trailed off into a hoarse moan. He was nowhere near as careful as he had been the last time he pressed inside George, all his gentleness and caution traded in for thinly-veiled anger and frustration, forcing his cock even deeper than before, stretching George tightly around him, filling him an inch at a time with no break to let him rest. It was dizzying, it was painful, it left George both wishing it would stop and begging it to continue, to punish him properly for his mistakes.

More than anything, he wanted Dream to reassure him, to comfort him, to even just look at him the

same way he looked at him before he made the stupid, stupid mistake of trying to escape. Why did he ever think he could run away? He should have known he couldn't be away from Dream for long, and now Dream was upset with him. It hurt more than the rough treatment, the claws dragging down his sides or the giant cock stretching him open. It hurt more than the physical pain of transformation, it hurt more than the thorns that scraped at his feet as he ran through the forest. It hurt more than any of that. It shouldn't; he knew deep within him that he shouldn't be craving the attention and comfort of a monster keeping him captive. But he did, and the lack of it hurt.

"Dream," He pleaded, tears pricking the corners of his eyes.

No response. Dream stopped pushing inside, halting his movement with his cock buried deep in George's ass, his knot perhaps only an inch away from pressing against George's rim. He stayed there, not moving. Was he waiting for George to continue?

"Please Dream, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have- I didn't want to escape, I never wanted to escape. I'm sorry, please, I'm so sorry, Dream please-" He was rambling, half-delirious, his thoughts stumbling over themselves and tripping out of his mouth. He was thinking too hard. He wanted so badly to not think.

Dream hummed, a growl rumbling slightly in the back of his throat; he dragged his cock out until only the tip was left inside George, then slammed back in deep at a pace that knocked the breath out of the man as his slick hole was stretched wide again. The agony of it was exquisite. "You're sorry, Georgie? You're sorry for running away and making me worry?" His claws dug in again, crimson trails carving through George's skin, jerking and shifting with each rough thrust Dream gave. "Were you just scared? I know you wouldn't do such a silly thing normally, you're a good boy."

"Yes! Yes, I was just... I was scared, Dream, I was confused, I- I didn't mean- I'm sorry!"

"Look at me."

George looked up, blinking tears out of his vision as he finally made eye contact with Dream, who gave a smile so soft it seemed out of place among the scene of growls, of claws and dripping blood and stinging red trails across George's skin, of thrusts so rough he was left breathless. Dream's eyes were just as beautiful and mesmerising as he remembered them, swirling green and speckled with stars, and although some more rational part of George begged him to look away, to keep his clear head, he pushed that part of him down, leaving it to retreat as the rest of his thoughts faded under Dream's gaze. He didn't *want* to think for himself, not now. He threw himself into the blissful thoughtlessness; he embraced the deep relaxation, the floatiness, the peace that came with an empty head.

"There you are darling. Do you feel good now?" Dream's thrusts didn't slow, his claws didn't withdraw from George's skin, and George didn't care. He couldn't.

"Mhm..."

"Good boy. I was so worried when you ran away, what happened to all the lovely things you told me last time I opened you up on my cock and held you close? Don't you remember what you said?"

George shook his head, confused and quietly upset with himself for forgetting what he might have confessed to Dream, but unable to recall anything within his empty, foggy head, wispy threads of sleepiness curling through his mind like smoke.

Dream leaned down, his tongue briefly flicking out to press against George's neck before he spoke, his tone deep but soft, carrying both a threat and a certain fondness. "You told me how much you love this, how you love being held close and filled with my cock, how much you love the warmth," His pace was still brutal, punctuating each of his words by slamming deep inside George, all the way to the top of his knot. George found himself wishing that Dream would push even deeper, force him down onto his knot and fill him entirely, but he never did. His fucking was relentless, harsh and barely restrained, but he held back from breaking George completely. "You told me you love feeling wanted."

Hazy recollections stirred somewhere in George's head. Yes, he had said those things, hadn't he? He had said them, and they were true. "Mm, I- Yeah... I do love that, Dream, I- Ah! I do..."

"But you still tried to run Georgie."

"M' sorry Dream..." He felt like crying again.

"I know you are. It was just a mistake, wasn't it darling? After all," He growled, a noise matching more with his movements than his sweet words, and delivered a particularly hard thrust that made George moan loudly, arching his back as much as Dream's grip would allow. "Where would you even go? You think the humans would let you into their villages?" His teeth looked sharper than ever as he grinned and nodded towards George's tail, which at some point had reached up to curl itself around Dream's arm, the one that kept him pinned down. "You're not one of them anymore."

The words barely filtered through to George's brain, fogged over with sweetness and stars and swirls of green. "I'm- I'm not-"

"You're not human anymore, are you darling? They might hurt you," The grunts and growls escaping Dream sounded more feral, outraged at the mere thought of George getting hurt. "They might *kill* you. You're much safer here darling, understand? I can protect you, I can kill anyone who even tries to lay a finger on you. You're *mine*."

He slammed inside George, squeezing his grip around the man's torso, and George practically screamed as Dream hit his prostate dead on.

"I'm yours! Dream please, I'm yours, only yours!" He was babbling, letting the words spill directly from his head, empty but for stars and swirls and thoughts of Dream. "Please, I want- I want..."

"Tell me what you want Georgie. You don't want to run again, do you?"

"No! I- AH! Mm- I don't- I don't want to be able to escape again." He barely even knew what he was saying. He wasn't thinking, and it was heavenly.

"You want me to stop you from escaping again, darling?"

"Mhm... Want to stay here, want you to mm- m-make sure I can't, *Hahh*- Can't even try to run again," If he had been able to think, that rational part of him that kept clamouring to escape might have screamed that he was begging for his own captivity. "Please Dream."

Dream tilted his head curiously, slowing down a little and smiling. George flicked his eyes over to the familiar tentacle that emerged from Dream's back, the one that fed him the strange goo until his humanity ebbed away. He looked back to Dream, his eyes lidded with lust and faux sleepiness, and tilted his head in a similar way.

Dream chuckled softly. "Open your mouth like a good boy Georgie, you know what to do. You

don't even need to think about it."

He didn't, did he? He didn't need to think, not when Dream was telling him what to do and praising him for it. He was a good boy.

He opened his mouth and eagerly sucked on the tentacle as soon as it slid inside.

The familiarity of it all was comforting, the comfort that he'd been craving since he scrambled up those vines and ran from the temple. His mouth and throat were filled, he was being turned further, and Dream was pounding in and out of him with a ferocity George had secretly been hoping for, hitting his spot with every other thrust. George was in heaven, sinking deep into quicksand, his mind blank and his senses on fire, honey-sweet and hazy, flowers and flames and blissful intimacy. Distantly, he could feel his hands tingling, but that feeling was quickly buried as Dream slammed into him at the same time as he finally, *finally* moved a finger to brush against George's neglected cock. His muffled scream turned into a moan around the tentacle filling his mouth, and he writhed desperately, not noticing or caring as the movement made Dream's claws dig into his sides and blood drip slowly down onto the stone floor, staining the cracks with crimson.

"You're so beautiful darling, so good," Dream's voice sounded distant, distorted like he was speaking through water, but George could hear him as clearly as if he'd whispered in his ear. Perhaps he had. George wouldn't know. "I'll always protect you, you know that. *I love you* Georgie, cum for me."

And that was all it took for George to topple over the edge, dropping into the ocean and letting the waves crash over him, his back arching and his body trembling violently without him even being aware of it, too far gone, too far fallen, overwhelmed by pleasure sharp and pain sickly sweet. His orgasm tore through him like lightning, fast and powerful, and dark spots danced over his vision as white streaks coated his stomach. The last thing he saw was Dream, smiling and stroking his hair as he roughly fucked him through it, before consciousness slipped from his fingertips and George willingly let it go, blacking out with pleasure still coursing along his nerves.

He came round slowly, dragging his limbs back to reality like mud, cracking his eyes open to see himself pressed against soft brown fur. It took him a moment to register that his mouth was empty, the tentacle having finished its job and withdrawn, and Dream had pulled out too, though not without leaving his hole dripping with a mixture of slick and cum. The beast had gathered George up in his arms, picked him up off the cold stone floor, and was now cradling him close to his body, gently brushing his fingers over the stinging claw marks on George's skin and nuzzling his neck, licking away blood and sweat. It might have been gross, but George neither noticed nor cared, not with his head still fuzzy and his body heavy, sleepiness soaking through his empty head and settling in his bones.

"Hello darling. You're okay, see? You're with me, you're safe." Dream's voice was soft, and George sank into it like a bed of feathers.

"Mmm... Hi Dream..." George blinked up at the beast, smiling sleepily and reaching up to wrap his arms around Dream's neck to cuddle closer. He stopped abruptly when his hands came into view, staring at them while trying to process what had happened with his hazy mind. His hands were now covered in a layer of short fur starting halfway up his forearms, its shade matching that on his tail, and his five fingers had been replaced by four larger digits, thick and unwieldy and tipped with tiny claws. He moved them experimentally, curling them down into his palm and balling his hands into fists. It was obvious that he had nowhere near the same level of dexterity as he had before; his new paws were clumsy and would be difficult to get used to, useless in comparison to hands.

Dream chuckled at George's discovery. "You like them? You won't be able to climb out with your hands like that. You're safe now darling, you can't make such a silly mistake again. And look," He shifted George's weight in his arms so he could hold one of his own gigantic hands up against George's new paw, the action steady and tender. "They look like mine, see?"

They did. Dream's were much bigger and clearly more useful, with longer fingers and sharper claws, but the similarity was enough to make George's chest flutter with something light and soft, something that might have scared him if he had been in his right mind. But that little rational voice inside him had gone quiet, buried down at the back of an empty head, lost underneath swirls and stars and sweet satisfaction. It wasn't there to chastise him for enjoying the helplessness, the dependency on Dream, and the fact that he had *begged for it*.

Dream closed his hand around George's, gentle and fond, and carried him over to his bed. *Their bed?* He placed George down onto the straw and leaves, not letting go of him for a second; he then laid down himself, curling his body around George, wrapping him in his strong arms and tail, pulling him against his chest. George hummed in contentment, snuggling into Dream, sore but sated, mind blank and body heavy with smooth, sleepy pleasure. He felt safe here, secure and protected, enveloped in warmth. Why did he ever try to leave this behind?

Dream's chest rumbled against him, his voice coming out hushed and smooth into George's ear, lulling him into sleep. "I know you're sorry for trying to run, you're such a good boy. You don't need to worry about that anymore, I'll take good care of you," He smiled as he felt George relax and go limp against him, nuzzling him softly. "Sleep well Georgie."

i need you to calm the senses

Chapter Notes

hey guys, thanks for being patient again! i know this one's taken a while and for that i apologise. i hope you enjoy this anyway! this chapter is very soft and sweet, i figured both you guys and george deserved it after last chapter <3

also! this fic now has a playlist to go with it:

[https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1yLN4k1Q0ZQkPFAeWiD9gb?](https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1yLN4k1Q0ZQkPFAeWiD9gb?si=hCN5xdf_TcSu_ws5DVskKuQ)

si=hCN5xdf_TcSu_ws5DVskKuQ (alternatively, just type "comatose fanfic" into spotify and it's the one with the glowy green cover art)

The feeling of warmth surrounding George as he stirred from sleep was delicious, strong arms still holding him firm against a huge body and soft fur tickling against his cheek. It took a second for his sleepy brain to process what exactly had happened since he last woke up here, memories of lying cold and alone with thoughts of escape drifting to the front of his mind. He shook them off easily. They didn't matter now, not when he was curled up in Dream's arms, warm and comfortable, and so safe and protected that his chest felt gooey, smooth and warm reminiscent of melted chocolate. A sigh of happiness slipped out of his lips as he cuddled back against Dream, kneading his new paws into the beast's fur. He'd be content never to move from this spot. That little part of him that still pleaded with him not to lose himself hadn't quite woken up yet, and he revelled in its absence, sinking into the tranquil silence of his own head like a warm pool, easy and free.

Dream shifted slightly, curling his tail up around George's side and bracketing the man's small frame. He mumbled as he began to speak, his voice rough with sleep but still smooth like silk to George's ears.

"Good morning darling. Are you okay? You don't hurt too badly, I hope. Yesterday was a little rough for you, I know that."

George hummed softly, assessing how his body felt as his limbs emerged from sleep. Stinging red scratches decorated his bare skin, trailing down his chest, stomach, back and sides, sending prickling pains through his nerves whenever he moved. The claw marks on his sides, deeply-cut signatures of Dream's barely-withheld aggression, were crusted over with sticky dried blood, the skin they were cut into now a patchwork of darkening purple bruises that bloomed like a garden across his pale flesh. His arms and thighs twinged too, aches that thrummed in his stiff muscles serving as a biting reminder of what he did the day before and making him suck air through his teeth in a pained hiss whenever he shifted. Dream took notice of his slight distress, rubbing his hand soothingly over George's hip.

"You're hurting, Georgie. Let me look after you today love, you deserve it. You'll always deserve it," He nuzzled his snout against George's cheek, darting his tongue out to lick at his neck affectionately. "I always want to take care of you, my pretty boy, my darling, my mate. My love."

And oh, what could hurt more than the ache in his limbs, but the ache in his heart at Dream's soft words? George *ached*. Never in his life had he felt more loved than this. It was surreal, this longing, sense of belonging, this flutter in his chest and flush of warmth through his body haunting

him, taunting him with untold truths and unspoken confessions, hushed certainties he felt unable to admit to even himself. It was surreal that he could experience so many emotions while cradled in the arms of a monster, tucked up against a broad, fur-covered chest so much bigger than his own, held so gently by huge hands that had the power to crush his skull without a second's hesitation. He felt so fragile, but so, so cared for, so protected, so *safe*.

"I'd like that," He murmured, the simple statement a far cry from everything he so desperately wanted to say. Something within still nagged at him, blanketing his words with denial, holding them back, holding *him* back. He settled for easy assurances instead, utterances that didn't make his insides swirl with conflicting uncertainties, words that slipped off his tongue without so much as a second thought.

"Good boy. I can take you to a hot spring, clean you up and soothe your wounds, make you feel good. You'd like that?"

George nodded, reaching his paw up to rest it lightly against Dream's face. "I like when you take care of me. I love it. You... You make me feel safe."

Delight sparkled in Dream's eyes as he dipped his head to press his forehead against George's, his tongue poking out just enough to swipe over the man's lips in a crude approximation of a kiss. It was still enough to send butterflies through George's lungs, a giggle spilling from his chest, the light noise making Dream smile. "I'm glad you feel safe with me Georgie, I'll always protect you. You're mine, never forget that."

Mine. George liked Dream's possessiveness a lot more than he should, the word igniting sparks within him and licking saccharine flames under his skin.

You're falling too deep. Ah, so there was the rational voice. George had wondered when it might show up. It seemed to grow more frantic and panicked by the day, urging him over and over not to fall prey to Dream's honeyed words and hushed praises, not to give in despite the constant moulding of his body shaping him to slot neatly into Dream's sick fantasies. *You can't give in to him! You're not meant to be here!* The voice was right. Wasn't it? *You're nothing more than a toy to him, you have to get out.*

It was beginning to frustrate him. He was so tired of the guilt that clawed through his stomach when it called him weak, spat vitriol at him for daring to ignore its warnings. What if he wanted to be weak? What if he wanted to give in to the haze and the pleasure and the warmth and the comfort? What if he *wanted* to be Dream's little toy, his pet, his *mate*? *What if he wanted to break?*

"You okay Georgie?" Dream's voice broke through his daze.

Realisation was, as always, like cold water, icy dread to his burning thoughts. His teeth worried at his lip, bitten raw red flesh a stinging distraction from the raging storm in his head, the internal conflict too much, too early, cutting rudely through the comfort of the sleepy morning. And there it was again, the desire to not have to think. That was the thought that cut the most like a frozen knife, deep and sharp and biting cold; he'd already lost his freedom and his humanity, and now there was nothing he secretly craved more than to lose *everything*; to lose himself, to lose his free will, to give it all away into nonhuman hands, to lose his mind.

"Mhm, I'm okay Dream." He wasn't. Ignoring that, though, he shifted, twisting around in Dream's arms to look up and meet his eyes. "Can I... M' hungry, can I have breakfast?" It wasn't just food that he wanted, but George hoped that the monster would pick up on that without him having to mumble his way through the humiliating admission.

Thankfully, Dream did pick up on it, a toothy smile splitting his face in a way that never failed to make the hairs on the back of George's neck stand on end, no matter how much he anticipated it. "Of course you can, darling. Such a good boy for me."

The tentacle emerging from Dream's back was a very familiar sight, and a very welcome one by now for George, who obediently parted his lips to allow it to slip down his throat. His neck bulged around the intrusion, gag reflex not even a problem by this point as he suckled on the tentacle contentedly, enjoying the sensation of his stomach filling, and of the odd tingling spreading through his body; his legs and feet, his ears and the skin of his cheeks, and as always, deep in his belly. It was followed by familiar aches, but George was relieved that the pain grew lesser each time, a dull throb like cramp or overexertion rather than the sharp stabbing pains he'd felt the first time he was fed, the first time his body was changed.

You shouldn't be getting used to this. The voice was growing quieter, a soft warning tone in place of screamed urgency, but George still felt hot anger flare up in him at its presence, and he clung tighter to Dream as if in defiance, relishing in the monster's gentle touches and tender, loving praises. "Good boy," Dream would mutter, and George would melt a little each time, butterflies in his chest and warmth in his heart. He *was* a good boy. He *wanted* to be a good boy for Dream, if only to hear more sweet pet names whispered into his ears. He loved it. He loved this. He wanted more, he always wanted more.

The tentacle ceased its pumping and slowly withdrew from his mouth, and George chased after it for a second with a needy whine, missing it until Dream chuckled, stroking an enormous hand gently down his back. "So eager, aren't you? C'mon Georgie, you need some food. The beast sat up and got to his feet, reaching a hand out to scoop George up too, depositing him safely on his feet on the stone floor before leading him across the room, George's paw clasped tightly in Dream's.

They stopped in front of the pile of bags, and Dream let go of George's paw to reach for a brown sack half-hidden under a torn cloak. He tore it open easily with a claw, and a selection of vegetables tumbled out alongside some dried meat. They looked relatively fresh, and George tilted his head as he briefly wondered how long they'd actually been there. Had the pile of unfortunate traveler's belongings been added to recently, even in the time he'd been living down there? Maybe he was purposefully ignoring the reddish-brown stains splattered across the rough material of the sack like a twisted art piece. Maybe he was purposefully ignoring the lingering smell of sweat and iron in favour of Dream's much sweeter honeysuckle scent. Maybe he was ignoring all the little signs of lives snuffed out, all the reminders of Dream's true nature, or maybe he was just too far gone to care.

"Are these okay for you, darling?" Dream turned back to George with a handful of vegetables - some carrots, potatoes and cabbage mostly, and a small bundle of dried herbs. George stared at them dumbly for a minute, blinking as he tried to remember the last time he'd eaten actual food like that. He looked back up and just nodded at Dream, who smiled and grabbed one of the bowls he'd used to feed George before, snapping some of the vegetables in half and dropping them into it. "It might be hard for you to pick them up to eat with your paws, let me crush them up for you Georgie."

At another time, days or months ago, George might have cried out of frustration and helplessness at his situation, unable to do anything for himself and relying entirely on someone else, his *captor*, for survival. Instead, the tears that sparkled in the corners of his eyes now were of fondness, slight disbelief that someone would be willing to do anything to help and protect him, to care for him so tenderly. He watched Dream crush the vegetables up with a stone, his tail swishing happily behind his back when Dream handed him the bowl. Satisfaction settled comfortably within him as he ate hungrily, feeling Dream's gaze on him glimmer with a hunger of a different kind, one that raised

goosebumps on the back of George's neck and set off countless alarm bells in the very back of his mind, warnings that he chose to ignore. He curled his tail around Dream's own as he finished eating, licking his lips and tossing the bowl back on top of the grim pile.

"Good boy," Dream's voice was oh-so-soft, and he reached out gently to take George's paws into his own, holding them and stroking his thumbs over the backs of his hands as he spoke. "Want to head out to the hot spring now Georgie? I can clean you up, and the warm water always feels nice. You deserve a treat darling. Or would you rather stay here? I know it's scary outside."

George's eyes widened as he realised he was being given a choice again. It didn't happen often, but he appreciated it whenever Dream let him choose something. George knew what he wanted though, and warmth blossomed in his chest when he saw Dream's expression brighten at his obviously correct response. "I want to go to the hot spring with you Dream, I know you'll keep me safe. Please? I've been good."

"Of course Georgie! I'm glad you want to come with me, I'll take good care of you." Dream used his hold on George's hands to gently pull him closer before scooping him up, an arm across his back and under his knees to hold him close to Dream's body. The beast made his way to the centre of the room, looking up at the hole in the ceiling above before shifting George's weight to support him with only one arm. A huge clawed hand on George's back held the man steady as Dream crouched for a moment then sprung up, leaping high enough to grab the ledge above with his free hand, pulling himself up easily even with the added weight of George in his arms. It made George's head spin, the sudden movement, the blatant show of strength and the way Dream's muscles flexed under his fur. He looked up to make eye contact with Dream, who smiled warmly at him.

"You okay there, darling?"

George returned a smile of his own, nodding and snuggling against Dream as the monster lumbered forwards, ducking his head under the temple door and making his way out into the cool air of the forest. The sunlight peeking through the canopy lit the trees up in golden hues, dancing in weaving patterns across the forest floor and forming sunny halos around the silhouette of Dream's fur. It was nice to be outside, and the anxiety that briefly bubbled in George's stomach was quickly settled by how much less oppressive and more welcoming the atmosphere of the woods felt this time. His less rational mind was quick to pin it on the comforting nature of Dream's presence, disregarding the fact that the pure fear he'd experienced last time he was out was because he had been running for his life with Dream *hunting him down*. That wasn't important now though, was it? He wasn't prey this time, he was with Dream, and Dream was cradling him close and keeping him safe.

The walk through the forest was pleasant; Dream had decided partway through the journey to move George up onto his back so he could drop onto all fours to move more smoothly between the trees. George was now lying sprawled down Dream's broad back, his arms wrapped around Dream's shoulders and his legs around his waist to keep steady. It was a more comfortable position than he'd expected it to be, he got a nice view of the forest ahead over Dream's shoulder and he could still press himself against the beast's warm fur, dipping his head at times to bury his face into Dream's neck, which made Dream chuckle softly.

"You like my scent so much I don't even have to ask you to inhale it?" He curled his tail up from where it had been swaying behind him, swiping it affectionately across George's back. "You're such a good boy, you're going to be the best mate I could ever ask for. Do you want it?"

"Hm?"

“My scent, Georgie. You want it?”

He did. He wanted it, so, so badly. His past self would have been horrified at how he was asking to be drugged up now, but the prospect of feeling nothing but an empty head and pure, desperate need was all too alluring. “Please,” Came his response, whiny and mumbled into the thick fur on Dream’s neck.

“I can give you a little bit... I don’t want you to get too tired in case you fall off my back. It’s not too much further until we get to the hot spring darling, I can give you more of my scent when we get there.”

“S’okay...” George muttered, tangling his fingers into Dream’s fur. He hummed a little when he heard a familiar quiet hiss, breathing in deeply when the sweet, rich smell of honeysuckle and fruit hit his nose. Gentle heat rippled under his skin, soft pleasure sinking through his flesh and bone, not overwhelming, just enough to make him gasp and press his body impossibly closer to Dream, his mind clouding over with hazy green and the dizziness of arousal alongside the slight pull of sleep. George moaned quietly, tightening his legs around Dream’s waist and trying to grind against his back.

Dream felt the movement, not slowing his walking as he laughed. “So needy, Georgie. Maybe if you’re a good boy at the hot spring I’ll let you sit on my cock. We’re almost there, see?”

He nodded ahead, towards a rocky outcrop almost completely hidden from view by the surrounding trees, most likely impossible to find unless you knew where it was. George perked up a little at the sight as Dream made his way towards it, weaving through the trees and climbing easily up the rocks at the side of the formation that seemed to create a natural staircase leading up to the top of the small cliff. Once at the top, Dream stopped, pulling George carefully down off his back and into his arms, and George got a better look at their surroundings, blinking through the slight haze over his mind, as well as that of the steam rising from the hot spring. It was a small pool a few metres in diameter, nestled in a dip amongst a ring of large, smooth stones, and bubbling gently. Thin trails of steam rose from it, covering the area in a light mist and splitting the golden sunlight into spectrums of kaleidoscopic coloured patterns that danced over the water and rock, shimmering in the ripples and bubbles on the pool. It seemed like a little pocket of paradise, tucked away deep in the forest and hidden away from polluting human eyes, protected by the cloak of rocks and trees that wrapped around it, keeping it safe, keeping them safe as they admired it. *Safety, protection, paradise.* Had George ever truly felt as safe as he did right now, in this moment?

Dream placed him down, and George sighed contentedly as he felt the glow of the smooth rock under his feet, heated by sunlight and steam. He slid his paw into Dream’s hand, letting the beast lead him forwards and help him into the warm water. The temperature was perfect and the pool was shallow enough to stand comfortably, and as Dream sat down in the water George settled into his lap, leaning back against the monster’s chest and enjoying how the water came up to his shoulders, enveloping him in heavenly warmth. Dream rumbled happily, resting his hands on George’s hips and stroking them up and down his sides, lightly rubbing his fingers over the scrapes, scratches and cuts still decorating his skin, cleaning the traces of crusted dried blood and dirt away.

George basked in the attention, savouring the gentle, tender touches, the love that Dream was giving him. He reached up to rest his own paws on Dream’s face behind him, smoothing over his fur with wet hands and giggling softly whenever Dream brushed over a ticklish spot on his skin.

Dream dipped his head to nuzzle against George’s cheek, darting his tongue out to lick at his neck

affectionately and moving his hands to clean away the sweat and dirt across George's chest and stomach. He pulled his head away slowly, but kept one hand on George's shoulder to hold him steady as his other hand dipped into the water, cupping a handful and bringing it up to pour it over George's hair, careful to keep his claws out of the way while he massaged George's scalp, rinsing out dirt and loose hairs. One of his fingers brushed against the base of one of his horns, and George let out a sudden, shaky moan as pleasure coursed through him unexpectedly.

"Shh, there's a good boy. Are you sensitive there, darling?" Dream laughed breezily, drawing his hand away from George's head once more and leaving the man shivering despite the heat of the water. "Let me clean you up, then I'll give you what you want."

A whimper escaped George, and he gripped Dream's fur a little tighter as he trembled, arousal still thrumming under his skin and tiny pants slipping from his lips. He leaned into Dream's touch in a silent beg for more, while the beast just smiled and continued his task of gently washing sweat, dirt, dried blood and cum from George's body. George loved the feeling, but as always he craved more; for Dream to take hold of him and impale him on his cock, to force him down and fill him up while making his head spin with sweet scents and even sweeter praises. *You're losing yourself*; that voice warned, and only for a second was George scared of the prospect of that being true. He wanted to lose himself, to lose his mind, to become something he was never meant to be, and to take his place in a scene he was never meant to be in, but in which he had never felt more at home. "Y-you said you'd give me more," He managed to beg through a foggy head and a tongue that felt far too heavy to be forming words. "More scent... I need it, Dream, please."

"Of course darling, I did promise it to you."

The smell hit George only a second later, accompanied by that familiar quiet hiss, and George's knees went weak as he flushed pink with heat from within as well as without; the water around him seeming almost cool in comparison. Dream's hands dragging almost torturously slow across his skin left undercurrents of fire and lightning in his veins, burning arousal buzzing through him and leaving him twitching and keening under the monster's touch. It never got any less effective, whatever that scent was, and George willingly gave in to it and let himself slip deep into the haze. He arched his back and pressed up against Dream's body, leaning into his hold as Dream placed one hand over George's stomach, resting it there and rubbing his thumb back and forth tenderly. "You're almost ready," He murmured softly, his breath hot against George's ear. "You've felt the pain down here, haven't you? You're almost ready for me to breed." He gripped George's hip with his other hand, and George shuddered as he felt the sudden touch of cool tentacles slithering out from Dream and wrapping loosely around him. "You're going to be such a good boy, Georgie, the perfect mate for me. Perfect to carry my pups."

Deep in George's haze-clouded mind, something was screaming at him, banging at the heavy door it was locked behind in frantic desperation, pleading with him to snap out of it, to fight to claw back the tattered scraps of his so-very-fragile sanity, to resist the way Dream's silky words caressed his more vulnerable desires and sank deep into the cracks in his psyche alongside the swirling haze of honeysuckle sweet green. They extended roots, clinging like bindweed, beautiful and deadly and delicate and suffocating. For all the voice's efforts, an entire orchestra inside his head couldn't have distracted George in that moment. Dream's embrace, his fond caresses and hushed promises were an addiction, a poison like heavenly ichor threading through his flesh and veins, linking him to his captor, no, his *mate* with gossamer of gold, a delicious divinity that lit him up like brilliant sunlight, that made him feel so *alive*.

He was pulled out of his own clouded, conflicted head suddenly by the careful prodding of Dream's finger at his hole, he was dripping slick, George could feel it, and Dream seemed pleased as the pad of his finger pressed up and dipped into his heat, careful to keep his claws out of the

way. George shuddered and spread his legs a little more subconsciously, moaning softly when a tentacle wrapped around his leg and joined Dream's finger, pushing past it to enter George slowly. His breath hitched as it slithered up inside him, the smooth, slick texture writhing against his walls and filling him, creeping deeper into his guts. It made him feel powerless every time, the insistence of the tentacles to fill him and use him and ignore his weak attempts to resist. He'd decided a while ago that he didn't dislike it, the feeling of powerlessness, and in fact revelled in how easily Dream could make him feel that way - Dream with his huge size, incredible strength, his tentacles and scent and his ability to make George weak at the knees without even needing to use any of those things.

"Georgie?"

"Mm?" He snapped out of his pleased and dazed stupor, turning his head to look up at Dream with hooded eyes.

"You're going to feel something else going into you, okay? Through the tentacle."

Glancing down through the bubbling water, George could catch the sight of a small, slightly egg-shaped pale blob within the translucent jelly of the thick appendage leading into his hole. It was pushed further along with each pulse of the tentacle, a pulse that seemed to mimic a comfortable heartbeat, rhythmic and steady.

"Wh- Dream, what's that?" Confusion laced his tone, but George was much less concerned than his little rational voice insisted he should be, worryingly willing to accept almost anything happening to him at this point.

"You know how I said you're almost ready?" George nodded, and Dream continued. "This is going to be your womb, darling," He stroked gently over George's belly again. "Your body is ready to accept it now."

That rational, sane, *human* part still within George tried to throw a fit at the mention of a womb, and he physically flinched, only to be calmed and softly hushed by Dream brushing a hand lightly up and down his side and nuzzling his snout against his hair.

"Shh, it's okay Georgie, it's not going to hurt. Once this is inside you-" He gestured down at the egg. "- It will settle, then grow out to form a womb."

"It... grows?"

Dream hummed. "It blooms, like a flower," He curled his arms around George's sides to hold his hands out in front of him, his fists balled together in George's view before he slowly opened them in a movement reminiscent of a flower blossoming. "It won't hurt you darling, I promise. Like I said, your body's already prepared for it."

George stared down at the tentacle with the egg in it for a moment as if entranced by it, before turning his head back to Dream and nodding hesitantly. Anything to be praised again.

"Good boy."

And there it was, the pleasant flush that, despite being layered on top of the burning heat and need still coursing through him like a summer storm, still made his lungs tighten, his heart beat a little quicker. He basked in it; the soothing touches and steady, languid movements from Dream as the monster encouraged his legs a little further apart, slipped the tentacle in a little deeper, pushed the egg along until George could feel the mass of it pressing up against his hole, making him whine

softly.

“That’s it Georgie, just relax for me darling.”

Dream moved his hand from where it rested on George’s thigh, just below his hip, shifting it to wrap his palm around George’s aching cock, delicate and deliberate, cautious to keep claws well away. And *oh*, George felt so small in Dream’s hand, so fragile. He keened and arched as Dream stroked him unhurriedly, murmured praises echoing in his hazy head. It was barely even noticeable when the egg actually entered him, stretching his hole wide before slipping fully inside and being forced further up into his guts. Dream’s fingers tightened around his cock, brushing under the head and pressing gingerly down onto the slit, and George let out a string of filthy noises, reaching frenziedly to grab at the thick fur of Dream’s neck, pulling his head down so George could turn his own face to muffle his sounds against Dream’s cheek. The beast only laughed, rumbles travelling through his throat and chest.

“Feels good, hm?”

George was babbling brokenly, tongue tripping over anything more than simple phrases, and the only words he could hear himself saying were a garbled mess of “more”, “Dream”, and “please”, begs and sighs and shaky moans escaping into the air around them and mixing with the sounds of the trees rustling and the water bubbling, an atmosphere blurred out by George’s lust-clouded senses. He gazed upwards as he fell apart under Dream’s hands, and the bright blue of the sky seemed softer and more faded through his hooded eyes and the steam from the hot spring, the view of the fluffy white clouds swirling and blurring at the edges of his vision, the sunlight taunting and drawing tears to his eyes that had become so accustomed to the darkness of the temple ruin. His sanity must be as crumbled as that place by now, arches and pillars worn away by the cruelties of time and loneliness, the sacred space invaded by claws and teeth, by blood and inhumanity and shameful desires.

“Dream, ah- Dream please, please m’ close, hhhng-” The tentacle had stopped pulsing now, the egg-shaped blob having been pushed out and settled somewhere deep inside him, and George was being driven crazy by the way the appendage now writhed and curled against his prostate, moving in sync with Dream’s strokes.

“You’re close, darling? Good boy, always so good for me, so pretty, so perfect,” Dream twisted his hand at a different angle, making George cry out and tug harshly on Dream’s fur where his hands were still tangled in it, the beast seeming uncaring of the pinch as he flicked his tongue out to lick against George’s neck again, nuzzling at the underside of the man’s jaw and just barely grazing his claws against the skin of his stomach. It was so much, almost too much, and George felt himself floating as he teetered on the brink of both collapse and orgasm, held down only by Dream’s hands and the words being calmly muttered to him in between blissful kisses and caresses. “Won’t be long until you’re mine forever. Can you feel it?” He gently rubbed George’s belly again, bringing his attention to a tingling deep within him, where the... Egg? Womb? Had come to rest. The sensation wasn’t unpleasant, just odd, like the tightness of a cramp but without the pain. “It’s blooming and growing, making you into my perfect mate. Come on Georgie, come for me.”

That was all it took. That was all it ever took.

With one final flick of Dream’s wrist, one more stroke of George’s cock in the beast’s giant hand, George tipped over the edge, his orgasm crashing through him and leaving him shaking with the force of it, his knees buckling as he trembled violently and spilled streaks of white into the warm water around him. He clung to Dream as the monster stroked him through it, whimpering when the hand around his cock and the wriggling of the tentacle still inside him became too much,

overstimulating him briefly before they both pulled away.

He was left panting and shivering despite the warmth, exhaustion setting in as quickly as it always did. Falling backwards into Dream's hold, George was filled with contentment and a slightly delirious exhilaration as the beast wrapped his arms around him and pulled him closer, rumbling against him in a deep satisfied purr that George could both hear and feel. It was incredible really, just how safe and happy he felt in that moment, and George doubted even that little voice in the back of his head could ruin this for him. This felt like *home*.

They sat there in comfortable silence for a while, the quiet bubbling of the water and distant birdsong almost lulling George to sleep until Dream finally dragged a hand gently up his body and used it to tip George's head to face him.

"Let's go home darling, it's getting late."

George nodded sleepily in response and clambered off Dream's lap, missing the closeness as Dream got up and climbed out of the hot spring on all fours, shaking the loose water off himself in a similar way to how a dog would, before standing up and reaching for George's paw to help him out of the pool too. George took a moment to glance down at his feet, which had at some point transformed into another pair of paws much like Dream's own feet, three-toed and clawed and with fur the same shade as his tail and hands now stretching up his legs and only fading off around his mid thigh. Perhaps if he hadn't been so drowsy that little voice would have had something to say about the new development, but as it was, George didn't really feel able, nor cared enough to try to process it right then.

"We can dry off on the way home," Dream assured George as he gathered the man into his arms, depositing him onto his back with the help of his tentacles. "The air's still warm."

George was all too happy to ignore the change to his legs and instead settle into the same position he'd been in on the way there, laying down and resting his cheek on the still-damp but silky fur of Dream's shoulder. He gave an affirmative hum when Dream gently asked if he was okay, and satisfied with the truthfulness of that answer, the beast turned to make his way down the rocky cliffside and head for home.

It wasn't really clear to George how long the journey actually took, or which winding path Dream actually took through the dense woods. Or even if he took a path at all. He drifted lazily in and out of sleep, watching the surroundings pass by steadily each time he opened his eyes. The view of the sky peeking through the canopy of trees above melted in a picturesque gradient from pale blue through to pink and orange as the sun sank lower behind the trees, leaving the sky in a deep shade of plum purple and peppered with twinkling stars by the time George could see the crumbling pillars of the ruin come into view once more.

The familiar walls of home encompassed the pair as Dream ducked his head to slink through the doorway, then dragged George off his back and back into his arms to hold him securely against his body as he dropped down off the ledge and onto the lower floor. George made a mumbled, cheerful noise when Dream immediately made his way to their bed, intertwining their tails together as Dream placed him down onto the straw and paced in circles around him a little before curling up too, surrounding George with warmth and safety.

"It won't be too long before your womb grows in fully," Dream purred happily, a stray hand making its way to tenderly brush over George's stomach again. "I can't wait to be able to finally breed you."

George stretched out and cuddled into Dream's side, letting the monster's words wash over him

like lapping waves and soothe him to sleep. They jumbled in his head, barely registering or making any sense amongst the encroaching fatigue, but the slight unease that sparked in the more rational part of his sleep-addled mind was very quickly drowned out, blanketed underneath a reassuring hum of want, a craving for whatever it was Dream was promising him. He yawned, willing the worries away and relaxing into the serenity of a blank mind as he closed his eyes.

Dream continued. "You're such a good mate for me, I'm so glad I found you. You'll be perfect, round and pretty and filled with my pups." He glanced down to George, whose breathing had evened out into soft, quiet snores, and smiled, lowering his head to settle and close his own eyes too.

"Sleep well, Georgie."

make me comatose, tell me lies

Chapter Notes

finally, chapter 7! i know it's been a while since the last chapter, so thank you guys again for your continued patience! the support you give me is insane, i'm having so much fun writing this story and i'm glad you're all enjoying it too! <3

// warning for blood, off-screen violence and non-major character death in this chapter!

The pleasant croon of a familiar smooth, deep voice in his ears was enough to gently rouse George from sleep, murmured words sinking into his head and dragging his bones from slumber.

“Georgie, darling, it’s time to wake up.”

It might be the nicest way to wake up, George considered sleepily; being surrounded by warmth and security. His mind wasn’t fully awake yet, and so the words from the monster curled up around him weren’t enough to force him to think, just enough to make him sigh in contented bliss and snuggle back, subconsciously or not, into Dream’s side. The sensation of soft, thick fur brushing against his bare skin and keeping him warm was something he’d never tire of, especially not like this in the mornings, when if he dared to reach out of their little bubble he could feel the slight chill of the air clinging to the shadowy stone of the temple around them. And especially not now, when he could look down at his arms and legs, or reach up and touch his ears, and he could see and feel his *own* fur, dark and silky and just as soft as his hair. It was an odd feeling, that of the realisation that he’d changed so much in such a short period of time. *Was* it even a short period of time? He was unable to recall how much time had passed since he’d first arrived here - it was lost somewhere in a blur of darkness and glowing green.

How much time since you were kidnapped and dragged down here. Ah, of course. The other aspect of familiarity in this place. This one was much less welcome, filling George only with unsurety and discomforting unease, harkening and calling to his every survival instinct, to everything that implored him to retain his hold on his weakening mind, on the sanity that was swiftly slipping from his grasp with each night he spent here in Dream’s hold. That voice felt less and less like a part of him; it grew more alien, the unpleasant familiarity fading away as he slept. It felt like the world he wasn’t a part of anymore. It felt too human.

George curled his tail a little tighter, his control over the limb a stark reminder that brought Dream’s earlier words back to the forefront of his mind. *You’re not human anymore, are you?*

It was true. Each little change added up; he wasn’t the same person he used to be, he hadn’t changed just physically but mentally as well, his mind a far cry from what it had been back in his hometown. Could he even call himself a person anymore? He glanced down to his very nonhuman hands and feet, then back up to Dream, large and looming above him, George’s beacon of safety and comfort. Was he closer to the beast than to the humans, now? Because it was true, he *wasn’t* human. Not anymore.

“Come on Georgie.” A tentacle nudged at his lips, and without even giving the voice in his head any time to object, he opened his mouth to eagerly suck it in. *Not human anymore.* He could feel Dream’s hands lightly squeeze his sides in encouragement, his touch cautious over the lingering

scars adorning the skin there. “Good boy.”

Distantly, George wondered when these feeding sessions had gone from being humiliating and bordering on painful ordeals, to such a soft and intimate routine. He could feel the same filling of his stomach, the same bulge of his throat around the tentacle, and the same sensation of aches and tingling. Though now, as well as condensing around his ass and his already-altered limbs, that tingling crept up into his belly, slight cramps overtaking the pins-and-needles deep inside him. George withdrew one of his paws from its grip on Dream’s fur to instead place it delicately over his own belly. Was that..?

Dream noticed the action, moving one of his own hands to lay it over George’s, dwarfing it and stroking the skin delicately with his fingers. George couldn’t see the beast’s face from his position, but he could hear the pleased tone of his voice: “Feel it? It’s blooming.”

Your womb.

He whimpered quietly, fighting the remnants of humanity within him that made him flinch with the urge to physically recoil at the idea that he had a *womb* now, that he was something to be fucked and filled and bred. That urge was fought back disturbingly easily by a much stronger one that keened happily at the very idea, a deep and primal yearning that cried out to be mated. He wasn’t ready yet. His womb was not yet fully grown. But it would be soon, and George was finding it more and more difficult to believe that he wasn’t supposed to have it. The idea was rooting deeper into every crack in his psyche, something about it just feeling *right*, like this had been his purpose all along, like he was meant to be here, like he was meant to carry Dream’s young.

As if aware of George’s internal war, Dream dipped his head down to lick against George’s neck and mutter, low and still rough with sleep, into his ear. “I can’t wait to see you stuffed round with my pups, darling, you’re going to look so pretty. And you can’t wait either, can you? I know you’ll love being knotted and filled, and finally claimed as my perfect little mate. You’re *mine*, and soon you’ll know that for sure. You’ll be able to feel my pups growing and squirming inside you after I breed you, so you’ll never be able to forget how you belong to me. And I know you’re going to love it, Georgie, because you love *me*.”

George all but moaned, shuddering and flexing his throat around the tentacle still feeding him. The thought of belonging so wholly and fully to Dream was driving him insane, and he could feel himself getting dangerously close to just letting go for good. The thread he was clinging to his crumbled humanity with was fraying, thinner now than the threads that bound him to his new life, to Dream, and even as part of him still scrambled to hold on, the rest of him anticipated the final snap with a giddy elation.

As usual, he was pulled from his frantic thoughts by the pulsing of the tentacle slowing to a stop, and the appendage slipping out of his mouth and retreating, leaving him with a full stomach but an odd sense of emptiness. George stretched his slightly inhuman limbs out in front of him, shifting in Dream’s grip and giggling as the beast let go of him to copy his movements in a stretch of his own. George soon missed the comforting warmth of Dream’s body and reached to grab at him, only to make a plaintive noise and tilt his head in confusion when Dream just chuckled and pulled away from his grasp, standing up on all fours and looking down at George with an apologetic expression.

“Sorry darling, although I’d love to hold you for a while longer today, I have to leave you alone here for a bit. I’m going to go out hunting and collect some things, and it’s not safe. You’ll have to stay here while I go out. Will you be okay with that, Georgie?”

“What..? No, Dream, please. I don’t-” He was begging to cuddle with his captor. *Pathetic*. “I miss you when you’re gone, please don’t leave me alone,” He could feel tears threatening to cloud his

eyes. When had he become so weak and needy? “Miss your warmth n’ your smell.”

Dream sighed softly, curling his tail around George briefly as if giving him one last hug. “I know... I’m sorry Georgie. I have an idea though.”

He padded across the room to the ever-present pile of old things, and rooted around amongst the bags for a minute before retrieving a thick woollen blanket from one of them, holding it up to inspect it for a second. George watched curiously as Dream then stood up, wrapping the blanket around his neck and rubbing it against the fur and over his scent glands there, covering the fabric and marking the wool with his own scent. He paused occasionally to sniff at it, as if to check that the previous scent was covered, and George’s heart soared with affection for his mate taking so much time to ensure he wouldn’t feel so lonely while he was gone.

After a few minutes, Dream sniffed the blanket once more, and humming with satisfaction, walked back over to George with it. He dropped the blanket on top of George, who gathered it up in his arms and buried his face into the wool, his tail swishing happily behind him.

“Is that okay for you Georgie?” Dream’s voice was a soft murmur as he nuzzled his snout fondly against the back of George’s neck. “I’ll be back as soon as I can, but that should help keep you warm until then.”

“It’s amazing... Mm, thank you Dream. I’ll be okay until you get back.” He turned his head to leave a kiss on the monster’s nose, to which Dream made a sweet, surprised noise and snaked his tongue out to lick at George’s cheek in turn, making the man giggle.

“Alright, I’ll be back soon.” Dream smiled and nuzzled George one last time before turning away, making his way to the centre of the room and leaping up through the hole in the ceiling to the ledge above, pulling himself up and walking away out of George’s sight.

George sighed, wrapping the blanket around his shoulders and covering himself with it. The last time he’d been left alone like this was the time he’d tried to escape. He wouldn’t make that mistake ever again. He wouldn’t be able to anyway, he supposed, first looking down at his mostly useless paws, then up at where the vines had hung low down from the ledge. Dream had taken the precaution to cut them back, snapping through the plants with his claws to make sure they didn’t hang low enough for George to be able to grab them again. It was only a precaution though, it wasn’t like George wanted to escape again, and Dream knew that. This was home now, and George’s new, less human side bristled at the thought that anything else used to be home for him, that anything else could ever have even felt like home other than this. Living here in the old ruined temple with Dream felt so *right*, so *natural*, and despite the protests of the ever-quieter voice in his head, George was happy to indulge in the fantasy that it had *always* been this way. Of course he belonged here! How could he ever have belonged anywhere else? He wasn’t human, not anymore, and maybe he never had been.

No, George was more than happy to stay here, wrapped in the gentle warmth of the Dream-scented blanket, and drift in and out of sleep as he waited for his mate to return home.

He wasn’t sure how much time had passed when he was stirred from sleep by the noise of commotion coming from the floor above. Voices, human voices, drifted down to where George lay, and though he couldn’t make out what they were saying, his ears perked up regardless. Why were *humans* here? This wasn’t their place to be. This was *his* home. His and Dream’s. Where was Dream? He’d be furious if he knew humans had been here.

George didn’t have any more time to consider whether to hide or to attempt to scare them away as he saw a rope get thrown down from the ledge above, a metal weight attached to the bottom that

hit the stone floor with a loud thud. The fiery orange light of a torch followed, and George could just make out the shape of a few figures above the ledge. One of them shuffled forwards, adjusting something for a moment before grabbing onto the rope and dropping over the edge, shimmying down the rope using a few knots for handholds. They came clearer into view as they got further down, and George could see the shape of a bag slung over their back, a small sword or dagger on their belt and the hood of a dark cloak pulled up over their head. They reached the bottom of the rope and knelt to pick up the torch they'd thrown down before, holding it up and doing a cursory glance around the dark room.

"Coast's clear!"

Their voice rang out clear, echoing slightly as they shouted up to their companions.

"You sure?" A female-sounding voice answered. "I'm not coming down there just to get murdered."

"Yeah, there's none of that weird green glow. I wouldn't even have come down if I'd seen that."

George, who'd made the decision to stay quiet and hope he wouldn't be noticed, suddenly remembered the faint blue glow from his own horns, and pulled the blanket up over his head to cover them just in case. There were at least three people in this group, and he doubted he'd have much of a chance at fighting them off, especially if they all had weapons on them. He had nothing but his own claws, and they weren't anywhere near as long or sharp as Dream's. He'd lost a lot of strength since he didn't travel anymore, his lean muscle being replaced with softer flesh and fat. He wasn't much of a fighter anymore, not that he'd ever been particularly good at fighting. And that was ignoring the fact that these people might have access to spells. Fighting them was too risky. George shrank back in his bed, cloaking himself with the blanket and the inky shadows of the corner and praying they wouldn't look too closely in his direction.

"Alright," The girl's voice said. "I'm coming down to join you then. Start looking for valuables or anything you recognise from the village. Zeph can keep watch up there, and Fundy's outside."

With that, a second figure started shuffling down the rope while the first set the torch back down on the ground and moved over to the dead man's pile, leaning over to rummage through the heap of old bags and bloodstained cloaks, fabric rustling and bones clattering against each other as the person pulled small bags of coins and the occasional piece of jewellery or decorative knife from the packs whose owners had long since passed.

"Gods, this is grim," They muttered half-distractedly as the girl walked up behind them. "You come here every few months, Alex? I don't know how you manage it. What if the devil-beast comes back?"

The girl - Alex - shrugged, joining the hunt through the pile. "It's good money. The beast's tracks outside are fresh so it won't be back for a while, we just need to grab what we can and go. I'm honestly surprised you haven't come with me before, Merrick. This is exactly your kind of scheme, you fuckin' weasel."

Merrick laughed. "Listen I'd rather stay away from the risk of death usually. I don't fuck with devil-beasts, but if you think we can-"

"Hang on, move to the other side of that part there- Yeah, I already checked those bags last time."

"Alright. So yeah, what I was saying... If you think we can get a decent amount from this then it'll be worth it." They snorted. "I wouldn't have come here if I wasn't in debt."

“Ain’t that always the way.”

Silence hung around them as they continued working, only broken up by the noise of rummaging and shuffling, and quiet exclamations whenever one of them found something of note and dropped it into their own bag. George could hear his own heartbeat pounding in his ears, his anxiety growing the longer the humans stayed nearby.

Finally Alex stood up, adjusting her pack and gesturing to Merrick. “Time to leave,” She urged. “I don’t feel like being here when the devil-beast gets back.”

Merrick nodded, stepping over discarded bones as he made his way back to the centre of the room. “Me neither. Wait, have we checked that corner yet?”

“Hm?”

Merrick waved their hand in the direction of the bed - and George. “There’s something over there.”

“Oh I think it sleeps there. Just straw.”

“No there’s something else there, look. I’ll just check it out real quick, then we can leave.”

George shrank back as he heard footsteps coming closer. No no no nononononono-

“Never mind, just looks like a blanket or something... Oh fuck!”

George froze as he felt fabric being lifted off his head, looking up to see a shocked expression painting the face of the person who found him. They stared at him for a moment, before turning to call over to Alex. “There’s someone over here!”

“What the fuck? Do you mean like a person or-” A second set of footsteps hurried over to stand beside the first. “Oh gods, he looks human, how is he still alive?” The blanket shifted again, pulled off to reveal more of George’s body, and the expressions on the faces above him turned to concern. “That’s- He’s not fully human. Do you think he’s a demon halfling, or...”

A fearful squeak was the only sound produced when George attempted to speak, and the humans’ attention was back on his face.

“I think there might be a spell on him,” Alex muttered, reaching out to touch George’s face, who flinched back immediately. “There’s a green ring and speckles in his eyes, he’s probably hypnotised or something. Hang on. Hey,” She snapped her fingers in front of George. “Can you understand me?”

George’s second attempt at speaking was only a little more successful, stuttering and tripping over his words as he responded. “W-who are you? I don’t... You- He’s coming back soon, why... Why are you here? I don’t-”

Alex turned back to Merrick, concern written all over her face. “He’s definitely under a spell or something. I don’t know why that thing’s keeping him here, but I don’t like it. We should go before it gets back.”

Merrick looked at George for a moment in consideration, before shaking their head at Alex. “We should take him back to the village with us, get him to a healer. If he is under a spell it can be broken, right? If he’s a halfling he can pay us back with a deal after we rescue him.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea, Merrick... We don’t know for sure if he’s a halfling or if he’s

something else. Look, he has horns like the devil-beast! What if we get him back to the village and he slaughters everyone? He could be a shifter for all we know.”

“We’ll tie him up then!” Merrick argued back, grabbing another length of rope out of their pack. “Think about it Alex, if we snap him out of it and reverse whatever spell he’s under then he could tell us more about the devil-beast! If it’s been keeping him here he might know something about it, right? What it might be weak to, when it leaves and comes back, things like that,” They reached forwards, quickly grabbing George’s hands before he could wriggle free, and looping the rope around his wrists. “We might be able to sell whatever information we get to the beast slayers, at least.” They tied a knot to hold it firm before pulling their knife from its sheath and cutting the end of the rope off. Throwing the blanket off George, Merrick made to do the same with his ankles, and George panicked.

“No! No no no, no, why, why are you-” He thrashed against the restraints, trying to kick his feet out even as Merrick looped the rope and secured it around his ankles too, leaving him wriggling frantically to try to pull his hands free. “I don’t- Please let me go, let me-” His tail swung frenziedly, and he desperately tried to reach for the blanket Dream had left him with, seeking the comfort as his chest heaved with quick, panicky breaths. “Let me- let me go! I don’t- I-” The familiar pressure of tears building up behind his eyes was making his head swim, and he cried out for the one he so badly needed. “Dream! *DREAM!*”

“Fuck! Shut him up quick, or he’ll get us all killed!” Alex almost yelled, grabbing an old cloak off the pile and tearing off a long strip of cloth, wrapping it around George’s head and covering his mouth to muffle his screams and sobs before tying it tight. “Gods, Merrick, I don’t think this is worth it, he looks pretty far gone. How are we even going to get him back up there?”

“We can tie him to the bottom of the ladder rope and drag him up after us. Listen I really think we can get some use out of this guy. He can’t have been here for more than a few days, surely. If we can get him back to the village, I’m sure Fives can do his healing shit and break any spells or curses he’s under... Trust me on this one, okay?”

“To be honest Merrick, I’ve never really trusted you on anything. But alright, we can try dragging him out of here. You’ll have to pay Fives for his care, though.”

Merrick pulled a face, but nodded reluctantly. “Fine, I can do that. I’m interested in what we can get out of him anyway. He’s gotta have some kind of information or *something*. Okay, you climb back up first,” They wrapped the last of their own rope around George’s torso, pinning his arms to his sides with his hands still bound in front of him, and ignored his muffled crying as they secured it tightly. “And I’ll swap him for the weight and follow you up. Zephyr can help us pull him up when we both get to the ledge.”

Alex gave one last worried glance to George before turning and taking hold of the rope still hanging down from the ledge, pulling herself up to climb quickly up to the ledge. Merrick gripped the rope binds around George, dragging him to the centre of the room and dropping him onto the floor while they knelt to untie the metal weight from the end of the climbing rope, grimacing as they put it into their bag. “That’s gonna be a bitch to climb with...” They muttered as they instead tied the end of the rope to the helpless, still-crying George, knotting it around one of the loops of his restraints. “Don’t worry halfling,” They offered George a pat on the back as some attempt at reassurance. “We’ll get you to a healer and get you out of the devil-beast’s control soon.”

With that, they grabbed hold of the rope and heaved themselves up, shimmying up to the ledge and leaving the rope to sway as they climbed, making George wobble with the movements of it at the bottom. He trembled, trying desperately to flex his hands enough to scratch at the rope with his

claws, but struggling to move much in his binds. He was terrified, he didn't want to leave the relative safety of the temple to be dragged outside by these humans who were trying to take him back to their village. Where was Dream? The comfort of the beast's strong arms and soft fur was all George wanted right now. He didn't want to go with the humans, he didn't want to be released from Dream's control, he didn't want to go back to a human village. He just wanted, no, *needed* Dream. He needed his mate.

He tensed up as he felt the rope around him tighten and start drawing upwards, forcing him to brace himself as it dragged him off the ground and started pulling him up towards the ledge. It was agonising, the ropes rubbed and burned against his bare skin, and the thought of being forced to leave the temple without Dream there to protect him was more terrifying than George had ever expected it to be. These humans were *enemies*.

But they can help you. That little, quiet voice was back, trying to shout through the cracks in George's mind. *You don't belong here. They're rescuing you.*

George didn't want to be rescued.

The voice was forgotten as George finally reached the ledge, being pulled over and onto the cold stone floor by three pairs of hands that grabbed him and manhandled him and made his skin crawl with how wrong it felt, how uncomfortable it was to be touched by anyone other than Dream. He looked up, blinking in the light that seeped in through the doorways of the ruin, and whimpered as he saw yet another human face staring down at him.

"Is this why there was so much commotion down there?" The new voice asked. "Who is this? Why'd you tie him up and drag him up here? And why is he, like... Fully naked?"

Alex sighed. "We don't know who he is or why he was down there. Or why he'd naked." She pulled a face. "We pulled him out because he has a spell on him or something, and Merrick thinks if we bring him back to the village Fives might be able to heal him and snap him out of it. Thinks he might be able to tell us more about the devil-beast."

"He's a halfling too! He can get us a deal of some kind if we help him," Merrick added. "Or any info he gives we could sell to the beast-slayers. Think about it, Zeph. Alex isn't convinced."

"Are you sure he's a halfling? He doesn't look like one," The new person - Zephyr? - responded. "But there's probably some use we can get out of him anyway. Are we just going to drag him all the way back to the village like this? I don't know if we can make it before the devil-beast gets back."

"Fundy's still keeping watch outside, right? He can give us a hand."

"I don't think he'll like this. Something about this doesn't seem right... You know he's sensitive to that kind of thing."

"He always gets weird about anything unexpected, you know how he is. It's never anything to worry about."

"This is different, it's more like--"

"Can we please get out of here now?" Alex interrupted suddenly, reaching to grab hold of the ropes binding George's wrists, pulling him more towards her. "Here Merrick, you grab his ankles."

"Right."

Between the two of them, they heaved the helpless George off the ground, holding him up between them as they turned to carry him outside, Zeph gathering up the last of the climbing rope, torches and gear and following close behind them. They broke out into the daylight, making George squirm and clench his eyes shut in discomfort, whimpering through his gag. He opened his eyes again as he felt himself being carried further into the forest, trying to memorise the way the humans were going so if he got the chance to wriggle free, he'd be able to get back to the ruin. Back *home*. It was difficult though with the way he was being taken, facing backwards and half-carried, half-dragged along a makeshift path through the trees. He was dizzy, his head was painfully clear and he was still shaking uncontrollably. He missed Dream. Where was Dream? George yearned for his protection, to be close to him. He hadn't been away from the beast for long, but he was terrified and he missed him so, so badly.

Eventually, George felt himself being rather unceremoniously dropped onto the dirt of the forest floor, sitting there awkwardly with tears coating his cheeks and his hands and feet still bound. He looked up to see his three "rescuers" talking to yet another human, this one tall and with what looked like a fox skin cloak pulled up over his hair, but not so far as to obscure his face. The ears of the cloak stuck up from his head as if they belonged to him, blending in with his light rusty hair. Other than the cloak, he was dressed similarly to the others, and it offered George little reassurance.

...Though as George looked closer at the man with the fox cloak, he couldn't help but feel a stirring of recognition from somewhere within the corners of his mind, the more human fragments of his memories slotting together like an intricate puzzle to form a picture of someone familiar. George struggled to place it, to place him.

"I thought you guys were just going looking for abandoned stuff! What the hell have you brought back this time!?" He glanced down at George for just a second, a look of horror and panic crossing his features before he looked back up at Alex, Merrick and Zephyr. "Why did you tie this guy up and bring him out here? He looks like the devil-beast's claimed him!"

George's rescuers looked between themselves nervously.

"What do you mean, Fundy? He looks like a halfling, right? We figured he's been put under a spell..." Merrick suddenly sounded very unsure. "If we get him back he's gotta be useful somehow! Fiveup can work his magic, snap him out of whatever spell he's under, and then-"

Fundy... Fundy!

George's eyes widened as the puzzle pieces clicked into place, recognition like paint colourful and bright spilling across his memories. He knew Fundy! They were friends, or they had been, back-Back in... In the town they'd both grown up in. They'd played together amongst the pebble-paved streets, dancing in easy, lighthearted games in between the little thatched-roof houses, they'd practiced sword fighting together as they grew older, and as they grew older still George had watched Fundy pack his bag and wave goodbye to him, and to the town, and make his way over the hill and across the bay to the west. And now here he was, standing in front of George and not even sparing him a second glance, even as George made his throat hoarse with muffled screams. Part of him, the more human part of him, the part of him with the little voice in the back of his head, that part of him hoped that Fundy would realise who he was, would recognise him and call his name and drag him back to humanity. The other part of him though, the more primal, more feral, more *inhuman* part of him, that part of him hoped that Fundy would have forgotten him entirely, that he wouldn't see through the way Dream had so carefully shaped and changed George to his liking, that he wouldn't see the familiarity and humanity still left in George. That part of him was louder, much louder.

“Woah woah woah! No! I’m not- I don’t want to help you bring him back! I don’t want me or Fiveup involved in this!” Fundy’s tone as he cut Merrick off was a swirling mixture of anger, upset and confusion. “Don’t you see? The beast’s going to come to claim its...” He glanced over at George again. “Its pet, or whatever- It’s not going to let something like this go, we don’t know what it could do! What if it comes to the village hunting for us?”

“It doesn’t tend to leave the forest though, does it?” Alex kept her voice a little more steady than Merrick’s, speaking carefully as if trying to convince herself more than Fundy. “Come on Fundy, I know you want to protect your lover or whatever but this could be a real boon for us. This guy’s tied up, he can’t attack or anything, and even if he’s a shifter he can’t shift while he’s restrained. Do you think the devil-beast would really come out into the open to retrieve one person? It’ll be fine.”

“I don’t- I just don’t want Fives to get hurt... I know he’s a healer but I don’t know how easy it would be for him to break a spell if it was put on by the beast. You know how strong those things are, Alex! We don’t even know if- What if this guy isn’t even under a spell?” His eyes drifted down to George and his speech trailed off as he stared for a moment longer, George’s breath caught in his throat as he saw a brief flicker of recognition flash for a split-second in Fundy’s gaze, the man’s features twisting slightly as if in confusion. Could he actually see George for who he used to be?

Yes! The little voice in George’s head began to celebrate. *He can help! He can save you!*

And then the moment passed. Fundy blinked and shook his head, looking back up to Alex, Merrick and Zephyr.

“No. I’m not helping you. I don’t want anything to do with this, for my sake and Fiveup’s. Don’t bring him back to the village or I’ll tell Wilbur to cast you out with him. The beast’s claimed him already, he’s a cursed soul. Just look at him. You’ll kill us all if you bring him back, and I’m not having blood on my hands! Put him back if you know what’s good for you, or else I have no sympathy for whatever happens to you.”

And with that, Fundy turned and strode off silently through the trees, vanishing into the dense undergrowth without even looking back. George watched him leave, the voice in his head quieting and fading off into the distance along with the fox skin cloak. Any hopes George might have had of being recognised, of being greeted with his name and dragged back to humanity, of being severed from Dream’s control, of being *saved* were drifting away from him, tied to Fundy with glittering threads like fate, trailing behind him as he walked away out of George’s sight and out of his life forever.

And maybe that totality, that finality was terrifying, but nothing but glowing elation bloomed in George’s chest at the prospect. Maybe he would miss Fundy, maybe he would miss his other old friends, but he wouldn’t miss his old life. How could he, when he had another forever spread out before him? A forever with *Dream*, with his *mate*. Forever seemed so beautiful in that light, sunshine gold and warm, always warm. Forever was comforting. Forever was glowing green and honeysuckle sweet, forever was strong and towering, forever was protectiveness and possessiveness and softness under his hands and security curled around him.

Forever was something that George could love.

He was snapped from his reverie by Alex turning to Merrick with venom lacing her words. “Well? This was your idea, what do we do now? I’m not risking bringing him back anymore, not after what Fundy said. Best case scenario is we’d be cast out, and worst-case scenario...” She bit her lip, looking down at George. “I’d rather not think about that. Fundy was right, he looks too much like

the devil-beast. I should've seen it before."

Merrick was silent for an uncomfortably long time, their gaze following Alex's down to where George struggled on the ground in his bounds. Their hands played with the strap of their bag, a nervous fidget that matched the hesitancy in their voice as they finally spoke again. "We should take him back, right?"

"That's a horrible idea," Zeph chimed in. "How long will that take? We don't have time! Just drop the guy and leave him here while we make ourselves scarce, it'll keep the beast off our trail for a while."

"What if he tells it what we did?" Anxiety prickled in Alex's tone as she considered the new possibility.

"Can he talk to it? Does it even understand human speech?"

"I don't feel like finding out! Do you?"

"No! I just think we need to get out of here fast before--"

"What if we kill him?" Merrick's voice cut through the bickering, causing the two to fall back into stunned silence for a second before turning to look at them. George's eyes widened, and he sounded a muffled scream through his makeshift gag, bucking against the dirt and struggling even harder against the ropes binding his arms and hands. They couldn't be serious, they couldn't-

"Kill him?" Alex sounded shocked, but her expression fell into one of reluctant contemplation.

Zeph hummed in anxious thought. "You think that'd be a good idea?"

"Think about it, we just slit his throat, drop his body here and run. We won't have to risk taking him either to the village or back to the ruin, and he won't be able to tell the beast what happened."

Merrick's hand shifted to the hilt of the knife on their belt; their fingers wrapped around the handle and drew it out of its sheath enough for a sliver of cold steel to catch the light of day, the glint of the blade making George's breath catch in his throat in turn. He shook his head in frenzied desperation - this wasn't happening, no, no, no-

His stifled cries falling on deaf ears, George thrashed out with his tail as he was abruptly grabbed by the ropes wrapped around his torso, being dragged up off the ground to have his head held high as the dreaded blade pressed in close to the line of his throat.

"Alright," Alex's voice filtered through to George's panic-filled mind as she stood above him, holding him up and baring his neck out to Merrick's mercy. "Get it over with, quick, and try not to make a mess. I don't want to have to explain the blood on us when we get back."

George crushed his eyes closed, trying to quash down the ugly, wet sobs that rose in his exposed throat, threatening to choke him on his own despair. They slipped out down his cheeks instead in shimmering tracks, hopelessness drying salty on his skin. Where was Dream? He wouldn't even die with him, in his arms, by his hand. He'd die here in the woods, surrounded by people who never knew him, from a village he'd never passed the gates of, of a species he could no longer say he belonged to. He was surrounded and looked down upon with pity and mercilessness, and he was completely and painfully alone.

The knife was gripped a little tighter, urged a little closer to his neck, and George braced for the harrowing inevitable, stiffening in his captors' hold.

The relative silence of the forest was shredded by a *furious* snarl.

George's eyes shot open just as the hands holding him up released their grip, sending him tumbling back to the ground as blurs of brown and glowing green streaked through his vision, the shouts of the caught-off-guard humans almost completely drowned out by a cacophony of deafening snarls and roars and thunderous growls that reverberated in a chorus of glorious, paralysing relief in George's tightened chest. *Dream!*

He curled in on himself, closing his eyes once more and letting himself sob freely with aching euphoria in the sweet reprieve of Dream's presence. He was saved! Dream came back for him! Going limp in his bonds, thankful for the lack of human hands making his body burn with caustic touches, George barely noticed the strangled screams echoing around him, the thudding of heavy feet on the ground, the thrashing and struggling, the sickening crunches and snaps of bone and ligaments ignored in favour of the *familiar, reassuring* sounds of his mate, here to save and protect him. As his screams had fallen on the humans' deaf ears, so now did their own screams fall on his.

Time passed in seemingly both seconds and eons before the forest once more fell into a lull, the uproar fading out into a peaceful hush that left George bathing in nothing but quiet serenity and the pale golden sunbeams that cascaded through the cracks in the canopy above. When had the sun come out?

Dream came padding over, his footfall quiet and steady, and George had never seen a sight more beautiful than the beast looking down at him with an expression so soft, so devastated, so *loving* that it made George's heart clench. He was soaked, absolutely *soaked* in blood; it dripped from the corners of his mouth and the tips of his claws, it stained the fur of his arms and feet, it left splatters like paint on a sordid canvas across the forest floor, pooling in a palette of deep crimson underneath the three mangled bodies scattered behind him. George couldn't have cared less.

"Georgie," Dream breathed out, his voice rough but oh-so-gentle, music to George's ears. "I'm so sorry I wasn't back earlier. If those *monsters* had hurt you I don't-" He sighed shakily. "I don't know what I'd do."

He reached out then, hooking a claw underneath the cloth covering George's mouth and ripping it off in one swift movement. George gasped, gulping in fresh air at the same time as rambling through his tears.

"Dream! Dream, Dream I missed you so much, I was so scared- T-they just took me and tied me up and wouldn't let me go, and- and they said they were rescuing me but... I didn't want to go and, and then they said they would- they- they had a knife and they said they would-"

"Shh, darling it's okay, I'm here now. They can't hurt you anymore, I promise. I'm here."

Dream gathered George up into his arms, drawing him in close to his body for comfort as he cut through the ropes binding George, making short work of them with his claws. As they fell off his arms, George immediately reached out to Dream, clinging to him with urgent fervour. The familiarity of the soft fur beneath his fingers was paradise to George, and he let the feeling sink deep into his jittery, still-restless mind, slowly working to melt away the shuddering sense of dread still plaguing him. He trembled, still haunted by trauma even enveloped in the safety of Dream's blood-soaked arms.

"Did they hurt you? Are you wounded at all?" Dream's concern was evident in his voice; he sounded ready to hunt down an entire army if need be.

"No, I don't- I don't think so... Just my, um, my wrists and legs- The rope-"

“Your skin looks red under the fur there. The rope burned you?”

“It rubbed, yeah... The skin hurts, but it’ll heal soon I think.” George sighed. “I missed you Dream, I was so scared when they came in- I don’t know what they were doing there. In the ruin, I mean. They were looking for stuff? In the pile- The pile of bags. I don’t-” He buried his face into the thick fur of Dream’s chest, trying to hold back tears again. “I missed you, so bad- I missed you Dream, I- Please, don’t leave me alone again, I don’t-” He breathed a deep, shaky breath. “I don’t want to be apart from you again.”

The voice in his head had nothing to say here. This was somewhere it didn’t belong, in this vulnerable moment, with suffering hanging over his head and his comfort placed entirely in Dream’s hands, entrusted with him, his mate. The voice didn’t belong here. This was precious, sacred.

“You won’t have to be.” Dream’s response was resounding, firm, a promise of one thing that implied another.

“You’ll keep me safe? Keep me close to you?”

Dream shifted, dipping his head and encouraging George’s face out of the fur of his chest so their gazes could meet. His eyes were as mesmerising as ever, but as George stared into the swirls of green and speckled stars he didn’t feel that same light, floaty empty-headedness the hypnotic sight usually coaxed him into. Dream’s eyes this time spoke of fear, of fierce protectiveness, of care and adoration, of promises not uttered by mouth. “You’re my mate Georgie, I’ll always keep you safe and close to me. I’ll hold you as close as I can, and I’ll *never* let you go. You have my word. You belong to me, my darling, and I’d sooner be struck down than let you slip from my grasp.”

And maybe that little voice didn’t belong with George at all.

“I’ll kill anyone that tries to hurt you,” Dream finished, his gentle, affectionate swipe of a thumb smearing blood across a pale cheek, and George knew he was telling the truth.

He loosened his grip on Dream’s fur, sliding one paw up to the beast’s shoulder, tracing over the outlines of muscle under the skin. “I know you will,” He whispered in turn. His soul was bared to Dream, who only had to snap his jaws closed around it for George to belong wholly to him.

George broke his gaze away from Dream’s, feeling fragile and all too exposed. “Can we go home now?” So heavy did the exhaustion of vulnerability weigh on the soul of a broken man.

“Of course.”

The stench of rust didn’t bother George, nor did the dark cherry wine stains drying ruddy into Dream’s fur and sticking to his own skin wherever they touched, nor even did the final sight of three crippled corpses painting the forest floor red behind them as they turned to leave. None of that mattered, none of it would haunt his thoughts as the sun slipped behind the horizon, none of it would wake him in the small hours when not even the moon herself could bear witness to the forming cracks in his ever-weakening resolve. None of it mattered. What did remnants of humanity matter when George was a hair’s breadth from shattering entirely?

Crumbling pillars and stone archways steadily came into view as Dream’s sure sense of direction guided them back along winding paths through the trees, and a sigh of relief escaped George’s lips.

“Missed it. Missed home, missed you. Wasn’t even away from it for that long but I-” He gripped Dream a little tighter as the beast ducked under the archway into the ruin, making his way across

the ledge. "It was too long. Too much, without you."

Perhaps if the voice in his head was a little louder, George would have heard it pointing out the absurdity of him craving Dream's presence, of mourning in his absence. It was drowned out instead, lost underneath every other part of him that was rejoicing, keening with every caress, finding solace in the intimacy.

Dream shuffled over the ledge, dropping down to the underground floor while keeping George secure with a huge hand on his back. "I know, Georgie." He placed George down as he reached the bed, letting the man collapse to his knees on the straw. "I won't be so quick to leave you again." He looked up at the ledge, then over at the pile on the other side of the room, and sighed. "Those humans would often come in here while I was gone, searching for whatever items are left in those bags. They're always out by the time I get back, so I never cared to go after them. They haven't been here for many moons. I never considered that they might..." He trailed off, his tail thrashing angrily behind him. He shook his head. "They won't come back any more. They can't."

George reached for the blanket towards him that had been abandoned there when he was dragged away earlier, wrapping it around his shoulders and across his front, pulling the fabric up to his nose and making a soft, appreciative noise when he found that Dream's scent hadn't faded from it. He curled his tail around himself underneath the thick wool, sitting back on his haunches and watching Dream as the beast paced around the room on all fours, sniffing the air, walls and floor carefully as if to check there wasn't any trace of the humans left behind.

Safety; this was safety, some part of George decided. His mate checking for danger, protecting him, protecting their nest. He felt safe here.

Satisfied, Dream eventually stopped his pacing and instead lay down on the stone floor near to the bed, turning his head to lick his own fur, cleaning himself of the dried blood with slow, deliberate flicks of his long tongue and leaving fluffed-up fur in its wake. George was content to watch him, the comfortable silence and green glow settled around them forming a bubble of their own odd kind of domesticity. George could love a forever like this.

He was beginning to feel his eyelids droop closed by the time he felt Dream's snout nudging at his cheek, and he sleepily looked up at him, only to feel a gentle lick at his own skin there, cleaning off the dried blood smear from earlier. Giggling lightly, he shifted, shuffling to one side on the bed to give Dream room to flop down next to him. He eagerly leaned into the huge hands that came to rest on his sides, the tug that pulled him into Dream's warm embrace. Fingers brushed feather-light over slowly fading scars, and George breathed out a contented sigh, relaxing into the comforting circle of Dream's body curled around him.

"Georgie." Dream's voice was soft above him, and George looked up with a questioning tilt of his head.

"Hm?"

"Do you want..?" And as Dream said that, George felt the slight, cool press of a tentacle against his hole just for a second, just long enough to make him shiver. "Or would you rather just sleep?"

The question made George pause in surprise, a look of contemplation crossing his features. Dream hadn't asked him this before, had never given him *this* choice, whether he was drugged or not. His voice came out quiet, unsure as he responded.

"Could we just sleep? If- Is that okay? M' tired Dream, I'd like to just sleep. Please?"

Dream nuzzled his snout gently against George's neck. "Of course, darling." He fell quiet for a moment before speaking again, barely above a whisper. "...I'm so glad you weren't hurt. I don't know what I'd have done with myself if they'd killed you."

"I'm here," George reassured, for lack of a better response he could give to Dream's very genuine utterance. "I'm safe. With you here, especially." He took hold of Dream's paw in between his - much smaller - own, cuddling even closer and relaxing against his body, letting his eyes slip closed. "Mm... Goodnight Dream."

Dream smiled. "Sleep well, Georgie."

fool my mind, i'm under your control

Chapter Notes

finally... the knotting chapter you've all been waiting for!

thank you so much for being patient guys! i appreciate it so much <3 i'm sorry this chapter's taken so long, my sister had to go into hospital and i had a spate of stress-induced nightmares that gave me terrible sleep and made me exhausted for a couple of weeks. things are clearing up now, my sister's back home recovering and i'm feeling much better, so i'm very happy to be able to bring you this chapter now!

also: happy pride month!! i'm bi and nonbinary, i don't mind what you call me in terms of nicknames (i call everyone dude/bro/hun regardless of gender lmao), but my pronouns are they/them

thank you again for your support, you guys are lovely and i'm glad you're enjoying reading this story as much as i enjoy writing it <3

The first thing George noticed as he gently roused from the depths of sleep was the immense, firm and hot mass of Dream's enormous cock pressing up against the swell of his ass, glowing the same bright green as the beast's tentacles and horns and smearing wetness onto the small of George's back.

The second thing he noticed was the sickly sweet scent, so thick and overwhelming that it made George's head spin. He gasped as he breathed it in, immediately feeling heat and powerful arousal sink deep into him, igniting his every nerve with tingling electric waves and sparking a fire in the pit of his stomach. It was stronger than usual, this time, and George found himself whimpering and grinding back against Dream's cock with an irresistible desperation he didn't think he'd felt since the first night he arrived here, when Dream had drugged him and drawn him down and pulled him apart with claws and teeth and tongue and tentacles. He'd been addicted since that very first hit, and as George inhaled honeysuckle and rich fruit, dragging it into his lungs like he never needed air before or since, he could only very distantly wonder why the scent was this paralytically strong while Dream was very obviously *still asleep*.

The beast was still curled around in almost the same position as he had been when he'd fallen asleep the night before, but had shifted slightly so as to press his cock up against George, seeking friction even while unconscious. His arm was still wrapped firmly around the man, rendering him unable to wriggle away without waking him. Not that George even wanted to wriggle away right now. The air was heavy with sweetness and heat, and he wanted nothing more than to drown in it. His more conscious, rational brain didn't even have a chance to make itself known before it was overpowered by raw, primal need, and George could only pant and squirm in an attempt to get friction on his own cock, even as he felt slick start to drip from his hole.

George's foggy head couldn't have even begun to try to process how much time had passed while he writhed and pressed back against Dream in a confused struggle for relief from the dizzying arousal, his attempts conflicted by the emergence of that little rational voice fighting its way through the haze, desperately shoving the barest hint of reluctance into the forefront of his mind. And perhaps it may have worked to make George question himself more, had Dream not chosen

that exact moment to wake up, alerting George through the tightening of his grip on the man's hips, claws grazing the skin against fading scars and leaving tiny red indents in the pale fat.

He awoke slowly, his first movements coming as he nuzzled his snout forwards into the dip of George's neck, pressing his nose against the skin and inhaling with soft sniffing sounds. George almost instinctively tilted his head to the side, allowing the beast freer access, only to jolt and let out a sudden loud whine as Dream moved again, this time shifting his hips before shoving his cock harder against George's ass to give him a teasingly small amount of friction, sliding against him with a wet sound as George's own slick smeared up Dream's length. A slight rumble rippled through Dream's chest, though whether in laughter or simply pleasure, George couldn't tell.

"Mm, you smell incredible Georgie."

Dream's voice was even lower, even rougher than usual, which sent a shiver down George's back, goosebumps raising across his bare, sweat-coated skin despite the stifling heat.

"Dream..." His own voice was lilted, higher-pitched and needy, coming out in pants and half-whimpers and sounding foreign to his ears. "I- I don't- Ah... Why do I smell? Mmh- Your scent is so strong, w-why?"

The bucking of his hips was prevented by Dream's unrelenting grip as an emerging tentacle slid down George's body to slip underneath the cock still pressing against him, sending a violent shudder through him as it entered his slick hole with very little resistance, pushing in just past the tip. It simply stayed there then, not moving even as George clenched down tightly around it. It was torturously small, not nearly enough; he needed to be filled, he needed to be fucked so hard he couldn't think, he needed, he needed...

Need, need, need. It pounded in his head as blood pounded through his veins, rushed through his ears, blocking out every sound except-

"It's finished growing, darling. Your scent is perfect now, I can smell it. *You're* perfect now." Dream took another long inhale against George's neck, humming at whatever he could smell that George wasn't able to pick up on with his lungs full of honeysuckle perfumed air. "It's triggered my rut." He shifted his cock against George's ass again as if to emphasise, grinding against the tentacle still inside his hole and making it slide in slightly further, causing George to gasp and push back into Dream's grip.

"Your... Rut?"

Dream smiled. George could feel the teeth against the skin of his throat. "I'm ready to breed," He slid one huge paw from its grip on George's side to instead rest lightly over his belly. "Because *you're* ready to breed."

George's eyes widened, and he froze his desperate movements to turn his head towards Dream. "My... My womb, is it..?"

"Your womb is grown, Georgie," Dream's voice was laced with excitement and an eerie tone of glee. "And now I can *finally* fill you with my pups."

A half-broken moan was the only thing that George managed to respond with, the promise in Dream's words immediately taking root in the sweetened haze of his mind like a parasite, choking every other thought that dared to try emerging. There wasn't room for them, not now, not here. He needed nothing else in this moment, and so it grew; that thought. *To be fucked, to be filled, to be bred.* It grew like a garden, like wildflowers in a meadow, and he let it, he let it take over his mind

like he was drunk on nectar with petals in his hair. Honeysuckle, sugar-sweet, addictive, too much and too little. Promises held were too little to fill his veins and lungs with, to weigh him under and drag him down, to buzz through his synapses and set his every nerve aflame with lightning and fire. He needed promises *kept* for that. He needed. He needed so much.

“So pretty, darling. You need it so badly, don’t you?” Dream seemed to be able to see right through George. Maybe he could. His eyes were alight with barely-restrained power, with his own surging arousal and with something so primal, so feral, so intensely inhuman it was almost frightening, like he was only a split second between either ravaging George with his cock or tearing his throat out. Maybe he was.

George only nodded, not feeling completely able to speak, especially as the voice in his head pushed forwards, forcing a deep sense of unease and prickling wrongness towards the forefront of his mind, only thinly veiled over by the animalistic desires his body was yearning for, keening towards, blazing bonfires under peachy paper skin and carnal cravings in the pit of his stomach. *You don’t want this.* It begged. *This isn’t you, you’re more than a bitch to be bred. You’re human. You’re human. You’re-*

It was brushed away so easily, like sand from silk, as Dream placed his hand so gently on George’s cheek, cupping his jaw and letting his claws tangle with the delicate hairs at the back of George’s neck. There was so much power, so much raw strength in the muscles that flexed underneath the fur and skin of Dream’s hand; enough to shatter George like stained glass, ethereally beautiful and infinitely fragile. Dream didn’t shatter George. He held him, smoothed enormous fingers over his strawberry-flushed face, pulled him impossibly closer as if he treasured George more than anything in the universe. He held George like he cared. He held George like he *loved him*.

That hand stayed, still and soft, on George’s face as Dream brought his other hand lower down his body, sweeping slowly over the pale expanse of his stomach and down his thigh, touch like electricity leaving sparks in its wake, burns that settled to melted candle-wax warmth as the hand ventured ever lower, teasing fingers feather-light against the rim of his hole and the tentacle that stretched it, only giving a split second of pressure before instead cupping George’s ass and lifting him, raising him off the straw of the bed to instead pull him into Dream’s lap and flush against his body as the beast sat up, the movement smooth and swift enough to make George’s head spin.

He was facing Dream like this, and the new position satisfied the part of him that longed to see the beast, to look up and lock eyes with his mate, to press his chest forwards against the wall of Dream’s body to lay his head against him, to hear Dream’s heartbeat beneath his skin and know his own matched a similar rhythm, an orchestra of two souls.

“I can’t wait to knot you, Georgie,” Dream’s deep, purring rumble reverberated through George’s chest. “You’re so slick for me already, you smell delicious.”

The tentacle already stretching George’s rim suddenly moved with a sharp thrust deeper into his body, making him keen and grip tight onto Dream’s fur to ground himself. Noises he wasn’t fully aware he was making slipped from his parted pink lips as a second tentacle wriggled in alongside the first, nudging George’s half-conscious brain with a song of familiarity from the first time Dream had taken him like this; a recognition months old by now, fuzzy and sweetened by time, rose-coloured and honeysuckle-scented.

The tentacles twisted, curled, pulsing and writhing inside him and sending George deeper into the throes of desperation, of need, of willing, wanting submission. A third traced the tight circle of his rim for a moment before pushing in to join the other tentacles, throbbing against his prostate in a way that made George throw his head back in ecstasy, babbling nonsensical words mixing with his

string of sounds. He was in heaven already, and he didn't even feel *full*. The need still lingered, something crying out from within him as Dream continued to stretch him open with his cool tentacles, his enormous cock tantalisingly close and still grinding up against George's body from behind, the green glow emanating from it leaving taunting impressions in George's foggy head whenever he dared to squeeze his eyes shut. It had never seemed so big, so impossible to take, but the side of George that was still battling for freedom and control was almost powerless against the pure, raw need that coursed through him, unrelenting and overwhelming, ever spurred on by Dream's commanding scent.

"Dream," He gasped, unable to say much else despite trying to wrap his tongue around the few thoughts his brain was capable of producing, nothing but his mate's name filtering through.

"So perfect for me Georgie." A fourth tentacle found its way inside, much less gentle this time as it forced George's hole to stretch ever wider. Dream seemed to revel in it, soaking up every moan, gasp and whine like he was the desert dirt, bone dry and eons old, and George's pretty noises were nothing but drops on the thirsty sand. His hands never settled on a single place on George's body for long, moving and shifting and gripping everywhere but where George needed it the most, leaving red crescent claw marks and burning heat in his wake. "I'll breed you so well. You're ready for my cock now, my darling, and I just know you'll feel so good with me filling you up. My pretty little mate."

George was teetering on the edge already, the build up on the cusp of toppling into release, and he had no words to answer Dream with as all he could feel through his heightened senses was desperation, sugary and thick and all-consuming, burning wildfires through his flesh hot enough to leave scorch marks on his bones, dark and ashy and tinted green. Green, everything was tinted green. It was all George could see as he clenched his eyes closed, bright and glowing and scented like Dream, the beast's influence inescapable anywhere George looked. It was comfort and it was fear and it was the threat and promise of forever.

All of a sudden, he was left with nothing, balanced on the edge with no way to push himself over. The tentacles withdrew even quicker than they had entered him, and he was left with nothing but that thick, endless desperation. He was undone, fractured and sobbing into Dream's fur as his body trembled violently with barely-contained want.

"Please Dream, please-" He could hardly speak, his begs crumbling between breaths even as Dream grinned in a way that was both knowing and sympathetic. "I need, I need-"

"I know, Georgie."

Snaking his long, tentacle-like tongue from between his teeth, Dream ran the tip of it over George's slightly-parted lips, before pushing it between the pink flesh and curling it around inside George's mouth, exploring in a way he hadn't before, their saliva mixing and tainting George's palate with a taste simultaneously sweet and bitter, rich and addicting like nectar and lemon and blood, poisonous not in its chemistry but its promise. Dream's tongue overwhelmed his own without even an effort, and George was helpless to do anything but whine, high and long in the back of his throat as Dream's hot, slick tongue tasted him as much as the beast pleased, licking every corner of George's pliant mouth behind his tongue and teeth as if he was taking him apart from the inside out, claiming him everywhere, saying *I own you*.

George's lungs were beginning to burn with his breathlessness by the time Dream's tongue pulled back from its exploration of his mouth, and he gasped for air only to have the tentacle-like muscle plunge back into him a moment later, this time pushing deeper to fill his throat and make George feel the scrape of Dream's sharp teeth against his plush lips. It was so much, too much and not

enough, exhilarating and overwhelming until George felt on the verge of passing out. He dragged his own short claws against Dream's arms, tangling in the fur and catching in short lines on the skin underneath. A warning, a plea. *I need to breathe*. Dream hummed in response, the vibrations travelling through his tongue and purring along George's nerves in the few aching, electric seconds before he pulled out once again.

"You taste so good, darling. Better than any other human, and so much more beautiful like this."

His hands drifted down, grabbing and stroking and pinching at soft, supple skin, drawing George's abyssal pleasure to the surface under the pads of his paws and the careful grazing of his claws. He lowered his head and snaked his tongue out to roam lightly, briefly across the expanse of George's neck and chest, flicking over his nipples to drag a breathy moan from his lungs, then curling around his exposed neck to trap that moan in his throat. He dug his claws in only slightly, before laughing with a deep rumble.

"Your soul is so much more delicious than your flesh, my love. Nothing can compare."

And George knew he was falling, knew he was slipping further, sinking deeper down. Dream's words were sickly sweet and seductive, and what scared George, what made alarm bells ring and warning lights flash red in the back of his mind, was that those words weren't a facade, weren't fragile or fake. No, Dream *meant* everything he was saying, and the fragments of George's human instincts, the voice in his head that pleaded for his survival, for his escape... Those were fighting a losing battle, pushed down and torn to shreds not by huge claws and razor-sharp teeth, but by promises of more, promises of love. Promises of *forever*. Dream was dangerous, so dangerous, but the danger to George came not from Dream's claws or teeth or taste for human flesh, nor from his glowing green horns, his tentacles, or even from his irresistible honeysuckle scent. Dream's danger came from his words, from his promises, from the way he wrapped George up in his needs and wants and from the way that George *let him*. He craved it, he felt the aching need not only for the promise of Dream's cock, his knot and his pups, but for the *love* that came with it all, for the mornings he wakes up with strong arms wrapped around him, for the protection of those claws and teeth turned against those who would dare hurt him, for the safety and security and for the feeling of not being lonely, of being looked after and prized and treasured. For that feeling of being wanted. Dream wanted him. He was *wanted*.

And those flashing lights and ringing bells might still be there, blaring warnings in the back of his head, and George *knew*, deep down, that this would be it. Logically? Perhaps, but it was more of a sense, more of an instinct, that this might be his last chance to turn back, his last chance to regain control of his own mind, to draw back his sanity and keep it tethered close, to save himself. This was it. He was almost gone, almost lost, and George was at least still aware enough to recognise that. It was danger, it was terrifying, it was permanent, it was against everything he'd ever known or felt before. And it was the only thing he'd ever wanted. George knew Dream's control was inescapable, his broken mind wrapped in green swirls and the scent of fruit, speckled with stars and tied to claws and teeth, to the threat of inhumanity and the promise of forever.

Gripping his soft milky thighs with one hand and his back with the other, Dream lifted George suddenly off his lap and lowered him down to the bed once more, letting him fall backwards be stopped only by the huge paw supporting his torso. George felt his head hit the soft straw and leaves, felt Dream squeeze his thighs gently, appreciatively, felt his own tail move almost on its own to curl affectionately around Dream's arm.

"So open and ready for me Georgie," Dream murmured in soft, lilting tones next to George's ear, crowding over him, caging him in with his body as he lined his cock up with George's slick hole, the tip of it pressing against his rim, sure and insistent. "So ready to be mated and bred, ready for

me to fill you with my pups.”

Dream spread George’s thighs a little wider, the grip of his left hand tight around one of them while his right held onto the man’s hip to prevent him from moving away or wriggling too much as Dream inched his own hips forwards. The tip of his enormous cock finally breached George’s waiting hole, the stretch burning, excruciating in the best way. George screamed, desperate and breathless, and his paws flew to Dream’s shoulders above him for support and to ground himself as he felt his hole get stretched wide, far wider than even around the tentacles. Dream was so *big*. He’d taken his cock before, but somehow now it felt bigger than ever.

And George supposed he’d never taken it like *this*.

A feral growl sounded from Dream’s throat, and the beast shoved his cock in deeper, making George’s mouth fall open with no sound emerging, his back arching high off the bed. George felt like he was being split open from the inside, Dream’s cock almost breaking him in two as it sank with little resistance into his slick, dripping hole. Dream was holding himself back, George could tell, unwilling to risk damaging his precious mate until he’d adjusted to Dream’s incredible size.

George didn’t know how far Dream had got inside him, nor how far he had left to go. He didn’t dare look down.

Dream mumbled reassurances, his voice stained with animalistic need and sharp with a feral edge. “You’re doing so well for me, darling. My pretty mate.”

George had never felt so *full* before, and Dream wasn’t even all the way inside.

Every millimetre he took felt like a mile, every second like an eon; George wasn’t entirely aware of how or where his body existed anymore, and he was already exhausted. His own cock stood, hard and leaking against his stomach, twitching helplessly as Dream continued to push himself into George’s tight, wet heat. The pain of it all was lost under the scent of rich fruit and flowers, the high of the hit, the pleasure buzzing through his veins.

Eventually, Dream’s movements slowed and he stilled, buried in George up to his knot, the final hurdle. George dared to open his eyes, looking up through his eyelashes and the hooded haze of his lust to meet eyes with Dream once more, the beast’s gaze almost reassuring but for the wildfire still behind the swirls and stars of green.

Dream smiled, dangerous and sharp and tinted with something fond. “You feel so wonderful around me, Georgie. How do you feel, my darling?” He shifted slightly, dragging his cock out the tiniest bit before sliding it back in, and George shuddered, a heavy, needy groan escaping him.

“S-so full... Dream- Mmh- Ah...” He could barely speak at all. His voice was thick and tasted like honey on his own tongue.

“Mm, you’re not quite full yet though,” Dream nuzzled his snout gently against George’s cheek and licked at the skin of his neck. “You still need to take my knot, remember darling?” His grin was dark. “That’s how I’ll breed you.”

George whined, long and high, his thighs twitching in Dream’s grip and his fists clenching where they gripped the beast’s thick fur. “S-still? Can’t- Please, won’t- won’t fit. It won’t-”

Dream responded by pulling back until only his tip was still buried inside George, then slamming back in to rip a scream from the man’s throat. His voice was sinister and syrupy when he spoke, words assured. “I’ll make it fit.”

His pace wasn't as fast or brutal as it had been when he was punishing George for daring to escape, but the echo of Dream's more feral state was in his every movement, in the way the tips of his claws pressed through George's fur and into his plush thighs without quite breaking skin, in the way he'd open his mouth to graze his teeth against George's neck without biting down, in the way his long tail thrashed behind him as he snapped his hips forwards to sheath himself inside George's body, punching the air from his lungs with the force of it. He was so big, so powerful, so inhuman, and he was surrounding George so completely that George couldn't tell where Dream's body ended and his own began anymore.

George's thoughts were swallowed up once more as Dream licked back into his mouth, tentacle tongue suppressing George's gasps and muffling his whimpers as it slipped down his throat. It made him choke, but the airlessness only added to the electrifying feeling under his skin and stained his moans with breathless need. He felt so wonderfully claimed, used however his mate wished as he was filled from both ends, given no chance to rest, no break from the relentless pounding of Dream's cock inside his slick hole. Dream fucked him like he wanted to *break* him.

George felt as if he might break any second.

Dream pulled his tongue from George's mouth with an obscene sound, saliva dripping from the bright green tip and falling back through George's still-parted lips, which he swallowed with a wanton moan, gazing up at Dream through his submissive haze. The cock still mercilessly slamming into him seemed to be getting impossibly larger or changing shape, and George could feel something threatening to stretch his hole wider that hit his rim with every inward thrust.

"Feel that, Georgie?" Dream smiled with all his sharp teeth, his words coming out between grunts and growls that would have sounded terrifying in any other context. "That's my knot."

He slid his hands up George's body from his thighs to his hips and sides, gripping him tight as he leaned back and sat up suddenly, dragging George up from the bed while still buried deep inside him. Dream sat back on his haunches, holding George up over his cock, his fingers twitching and digging his claw tips into the pale skin of George's sides with the thinly veiled need to fuck roughly into him again.

"Dream..?"

Dream shifted, bucking his hips just enough to graze the tip of his huge cock past George's prostate and rip a moan from his throat.

"You're about to take my knot, Georgie," He murmured, pressing his snout close to George's ear, breathing the words with a tone of promise and finality. "I'm going to force you down onto my knot and fuck my pups deep into your belly, and you're going to take it. You'll take it because you're my mate, you're *mine*, and you'll *forever be mine*."

George squirmed slightly in Dream's strong grip, torn between the powerful, primal, all-consuming heat of feral need that pulsed like a second heartbeat through his body; the need to be fucked and mated and bred and loved, and the last thin, fragile fragments of his sanity, the rationality of his more human side that begged him not to lose himself. *It doesn't have to be this way!* The sirens shrieked, flashes of alarm-bell red tearing through the haze of sweet, sedated green. *You're still human! You can't let yourself fall for this!* It spoke of permanence, of inability to ever go back, to ever even hope of escaping after this-

"Hm," Dream licked lightly at George's neck again, soothing over teeth marks left imprinted in his skin. "You seem troubled, my darling. Are you scared?" He chuckled softly, his breaths coming out hot against George's ear. "You don't need to be, you know that. There won't be any troubles

for you. Not anymore.”

The alarm bells screamed. George trembled, trapped between red and green.

Dream adjusted his grip on George’s hips.

“Let go, Georgie.”

And he forced George down over his knot, stretching him wide, filling him entirely.

And George let go.

He screamed, his broken cry a call to the universe of who he used to be, who he was now, who he belonged to. He let go, and it felt like a snap, like a disconnect, one minute there and the next not. The sirens, the alarms, the flashes of red, the voice that had clung to him ever since Dream had first taken George as his own; all gone in a blink, slipping untethered from his head and through his fingers like ice-cold water, their absence immediately swallowed by the suffocating heat. It was so sudden, so terrifyingly quick. And so *freeing*. George shook with the force of it, of everything. Writhing under Dream’s hands, he sobbed, freely and with a tremendous, almost bittersweet relief that made his chest feel lighter, his mind less crowded. His only thoughts sang, unobstructed and unsilenced, in his hazy head. *Dream, Dream, Dream*. He needed, he *wanted* to be bred, to offer his whole self and more to his captor, his mate, his *love*.

Dream was there, so close, seemingly waiting for this moment. He purred, deep and possessive, wrapping his arms around George and pulling him into his chest. This was the closest, most intimate, most connected they’d ever been, and George rejoiced in the sheer emotion of it as much as he gasped and clenched around Dream’s cock. He was so impossibly full, split open and spread vulnerable over Dream, the inflating knot seated inside the tight, slick heat of his hole and preventing him from wriggling away from the intrusion.

“So beautiful, so good for me darling. I’ll breed you so well, you feel amazing around me, I can’t wait to fill you with my pups and see you so round and pretty.” Dream’s composure was slipping with the pleasure of it, his voice more growls and purrs than actual words. He nuzzled his snout against George’s cheek, then pulled his head back just enough to be able to look down at where their bodies were connected.

“Look Georgie,” He sounded pleased, satisfied in how he was claiming George’s body and mind. “You can see me through your skin.”

George felt Dream’s huge hand roam across the softness of his stomach, then press down gently against a hard bulge in the middle and- Oh. That was Dream.

George followed his gaze downwards, watching as Dream smiled at him, then moved his hand so George could see the sight underneath it. The hardness of Dream’s cock poked out from the smooth expanse of his belly, creating an obvious bulge. Most prominent about it was the fact that the bright green glow of the member was visible through George’s skin, eerie and hypnotic. George breathed a shuddering sigh, releasing his grip on Dream’s thick fur to run his own paw down his body and rest it over the bump, feeling Dream under his skin, buried deep in his guts and vowing to leave his mark there as he had left it all over the rest of George’s body.

“Ah- Dream...”

Dream hummed. “Feel good, Georgie?”

George nodded weakly, pressing his face against Dream’s arm.

“Breed me,” He begged. “Please.”

Dream didn't waste any time then, rumbling with feral lust and thrusting upwards, rolling his hips in quick, deep movements and catching his knot against George's rim, not pulling back far enough for it to slip out before grinding it back in, drinking up George's pleased moans and desperate sobs and relishing in the sounds. George blinked through his tears at him, reaching up shakily to scratch gently at the fur of Dream's cheek before dropping his paws back down to the beast's chest, bracing himself there for support as he moved with Dream, grinding down onto his cock with every shallow thrust. He was stuffed so full, so beautifully surrounded, enveloped, taken by Dream, by his mate.

Mates. George had been taken, fucked and claimed, filled, knotted and now bred. He was Dream's mate, wholly and entirely, and Dream was his. This was forever, George knew that, and yet he could only find it in him to care about how incredible it felt to be owned. Here he was safe, here he was protected, here he was loved. This moment was sacred, divine and wonderful, filling George's soul with golden light even in the darkness of the ruin. This moment was theirs, and every thought that had ever graced George's mind about him not belonging here was long forgotten now, unimportant, trivial as he lost himself under Dream's burning touch and slipped into a headspace he'd never even come close to experiencing in his old life. It was fire, it was lightning, it was sunlight through the trees and the enveloping warmth of a bubbling hot spring. It was forever, and it was Dream.

George could feel his own climax approaching rapidly, almost overshadowed by Dream's obvious closeness. The beast was grunting; harsh, hot breaths escaped through the sharp cage of his teeth, his thrusts quick and messy and his cock twitching inside George's ass. Each roll of his hips pressed it against George's prostate, pushing him closer to the edge in a chorus of broken cries and sobs.

When Dream came it was with a roar, loud and animalistic, sending a tremor through George's body as the beast's hips snapped forwards and stayed there, buried inside as his cock spilled, emptying his seed deep into George, into George's womb. George could feel the warm spurts low in his bowels, a tremendous amount of cum filling him and painting his insides white. Dream's knot followed, inflating to its full size to lock itself inside George, inhibiting any of Dream's cum from leaking out before the beast's mate was successfully bred. George shuddered violently, stretched to his limits and almost delirious as he sobbed, clenched around Dream's huge knot and finally arched his back, spilling up over his own stomach and chest as he tipped over the edge with a cry of Dream's name tumbling from his lips.

Everything was blurry for a moment. George dragged air into his lungs, heavy and hot and still scented with flowers and fruit. His body still burned, his nerves still aflame, but mimicking the aura of hot coals and glowing embers rather than the raging wildfires of unceasing need that had wracked his body before. His desperation satiated, he collapsed forwards into Dream's soft, slightly sweaty chest, panting against the fur and letting his tears dry tacky to his cheeks. The swell of Dream's knot still kept his cock locked in place, making George squirm in discomfort around it until Dream lay a hand gently on his back to urge him to still.

“Georgie,” Dream murmured, his voice soothing and devoid of the rough tone, of the growls and snarls. He sunk his head lower to press it against George's, nuzzling gently into his face and neck. His hands had loosened from their harsh grip on George's hips to instead stroke affectionately over his chest and stomach, his touches light and fond as he brushed across the expanse of pale skin, briefly hovering his palm above the bulge still present in George's stomach before pulling his hand up to tenderly cup the man's cheek.

“Dream...” George sighed, tired but soft. His fingers traced idle patterns through Dream’s fur, curling them into tangles without much pressure in his grip.

“You’re bred now.” It was a simple statement, but one that held so much weight.

“Mmh,” George nodded, his brain still foggy in his head and struggling to produce words. “I’m-” He moved his hand to rub lightly over his belly. “M’ going to have... Pups... In here.”

Dream hummed. “You are.”

He used his gentle hold on George’s face then to guide the man’s face away from his chest, drawing him back to be able to meet his gaze. “My precious mate, full of my squirming pups... I can’t wait to see it.” His eyes slipped closed as he pushed his head slowly forwards to rest his forehead against George’s, their breaths mingling in the little space between them, and Dream’s continuing words being felt more than heard by George. “You are my greatest prize, Georgie, my greatest love.”

The solace he found in the intimacy coaxed truth in a sweet sigh from George’s lips, unfiltered by too-human calls to survival instincts now. “I love you, Dream.”

Dream smiled, all comfort and warmth. “And I love you, my darling.”

He held George, gentle and steady as he shifted his weight backwards, easing them both down until he was lying on his back on the bed, cradling George’s body on top of his, still locked together. His hands traced smoothly, carefully down his mate’s back, claws well out of the way as he sought to soothe rather than scratch. “Are you comfortable, my love?” He questioned softly, nudging at George’s cheek with his snout. “My knot will not go down for a while, so I hope it doesn’t prevent you from sleeping.”

George melted under the affectionate touches and caring words, cuddling further into the welcoming warmth of Dream’s large body. He clenched around Dream’s cock once more out of curiosity, before shaking his head and settling back down, satisfied.

“Mm it doesn’t bother me, no,” He wrapped his arms as far around Dream as he could, curling his tail around the beast’s own to intertwine them further. “Too sleepy... Can I..?”

“You want to sleep? Of course, Georgie.” He let out a quiet purr as he curled his form around George more, enveloping the man in strong arms and soft fur. “When you wake up I can get you water and food. You’ve been so good for me, so beautiful. My pretty little mate.”

George hummed, happy and exhausted, and pressed himself in closer to Dream, his breathing evening out as he slipped closer towards the sweet grasp of sleep. “Thank you Dreamie... I love you.”

A fond huff of a laugh blessed his ears.

“Sleep well, Georgie.”

comatose, till i'm blind

Chapter Notes

a shorter and sweeter chapter here, hope you guys enjoy! <3

// warning for mentions of vomit (brief and not super detailed but heads up anyway!)

When George awoke steadily in the safety of his mate's strong arms, it was to an unpleasant discomfort stirring deep within him, making him groan quietly and shift in Dream's hold, trying to ease himself enough that he might be able to drift back to sleep again, unwilling to move out of the tangle of warm limbs and fur he was currently nestled in. His efforts proved fruitless though, leaving him restless and uncomfortably aware of his own body.

He'd been waking up in pain often lately, his ass and lower abdomen throbbing with the aftermath of Dream's cock and knot, the burning ache rendering him unable to walk for days afterwards and making him squirm with discomfort each morning until Dream hushed him with reassuring words and a gentle scent reminiscent of strawberries and cherry blossom, a smell that sank into him easily to lift his discomfort and leave him feeling boneless and drowsy. That scent would be welcome right now, George thought, even as he realised that the feeling was different this time. It wasn't pain, not quite. The pain in his ass was fading with each dusk and dawn of however many days had passed since he'd been fucked and filled and bred by his mate. This was higher in his stomach, and George pressed his lips together to suppress a whimper as he rubbed one paw over his belly in an ineffectual attempt to soothe the waves of nausea assaulting him and threatening to claw their way up his throat.

"Dream," He pleaded, wriggling in the beast's arms to turn himself around and attempt to wake him. He reached up with the paw that wasn't massaging his own stomach, placing it against Dream's cheek and scratching lightly, drawing a deep, sleepy purr from the beast. "Dream please," George tried again, his tail squeezing where it was curled around Dream's own. "I feel sick, m' gonna... It hurts Dream, help, please."

The beast cracked one eye open slowly at George's repeated attempts to wake him, rumbling quietly as he roused from sleep.

"Georgie? Are you okay, love?" Dream's voice was deep and husky with sleep, but still carried a soft tone of care and concern that made George's chest flutter with gentle warmth. He sat up a little, tightening his hold around George to keep him steady as he shifted, then studying him with calm green eyes.

George met his eyes for a moment, then shook his head slightly and buried his face forwards into Dream's fur, mumbling his response just loud enough that the beast could hear him.

"Feel sick. My stomach- I might, I... Think m' going to throw up..."

"You feel sick?" Dream perked his head up. He looked equally as excited as he did worried, but seemed to push that aside and put his concern for George first as he rubbed one huge hand gently over George's belly. "Do you want to stay down here, or do you think fresh air will help?"

“Ah, mmh- Air? Air, please, feel sick-” The nausea was almost overpowering now, cramping his belly with squeezing pressure and churning his stomach until he cried out and almost doubled over in an effort to not spill the contents of his guts over himself.

“Okay, you’re alright Georgie, I’ve got you. Here,” Dream gathered George into his arms and held him as steady as he possibly could as he stood up, pressing him close into the fur of his chest. He moved towards the centre of the room, looking up at the hole in the ceiling, and George suddenly remembered the jump Dream would have to make.

“W-wait,” He began, but Dream was already readying for the leap.

“You’ll be okay darling, we’ll be out soon. I’ve got you, see?” Dream’s reassurances settled George’s nerves more than his stomach, but George nodded and held tightly to Dream, squeezing his eyes shut as the beast crouched low before jumping high. George’s stomach lurched, and he choked back the urge to throw up right there.

A soft thud and the brief scraping of claws against stone alerted him to Dream having landed on the ledge above and steadied himself before standing up again. He pushed his snout gently into the crook of George’s neck, giving him a quick nuzzle to soothe him as he padded across the stone towards the door. Ducking under the archway, Dream raised his head to stretch his neck out as they emerged into the fresh, cool early-morning air, not yet stuffy from the sunshine. It felt nice, and George took the opportunity to breathe it in deeply, filling his lungs with clean air not scented by drugs or sweat or sex. It was refreshing, even to the man whose mind was currently occupied by how much his stomach was trying to eject its contents.

Dream placed him carefully down onto the forest floor not far from the temple ruins, still under the safety of the leafy green canopy. It suddenly hit George just how long had passed since he’d last had the open sky above him. There was the time at the hot spring when all they’d had above the pair of them was soft blue and puffs of white, nothing to stop the golden sunlight from falling over them in warm, tranquil rays. Before that, though...

He hadn’t left the ruins for a while, and he hadn’t left the forest itself for even longer. George was beginning to doubt that he’d ever leave it again. What was even out there for him, now? Nothing. Nothing at all was left for him out there, it was all too human and unfamiliar. Here was safe, here was home, here was where he belonged. He had nothing and nowhere beyond the forest, and here he had everything. Everything he needed, everything he deserved, everything he loved.

Dream looked over to him from where he was scratching at the ground underneath a fallen log, his silhouette tall and solid even against the backdrop of the trees behind him.

“Georgie,” He called out gently, and George padded over towards him, nausea still rippling through his stomach.

It was as he got closer that George could see a shallow hole dug roughly into the ground, dirt scraped up by Dream’s claws. Dream nudged him towards it with a push of his snout against George’s back. “You can be sick here,” He continued, curling his tail around George’s own in reassurance. “I can bury it again afterwards.”

George nodded, relieved to not have to keep swallowing back the urge to vomit that kept clawing at his insides as he leaned over the hole. It only took a second before he felt the bile rushing up his throat, and he broke into tears as he emptied the contents of his stomach into the dirt, his body forcing up more with each violent heave and leaving him shaking. Distantly, he could feel Dream stroking careful, soothing circles into his back and muttering soft encouragement and assurances of “It’s okay,” and “You’re doing so well.”

Body feeling empty in more ways than one, George finally stood up, turning away from the mess he'd left in the hole in the ground and instead looking up at Dream, still trembling and with tears now streaking his cheeks.

"Dream," He started, though the rest of his words died on his tongue, soiled with the lingering sour taste and caught with the burn at the back of his throat. Dizziness marred his head, left over from leaning forward, from gasping in hurried breaths between surges from his stomach. He pressed a paw to his belly, rubbing over the now less tender flesh. It was a relief to be able to stand without nausea making him want to curl up; however, bone-deep tiredness still plagued him, dragging down his heavy limbs as if they were weighted with lead.

"You are with pups," Dream said simply. He looped his tail around George's back, pulling him gently closer and looking into his eyes with an expression of soft excitement, of muted pride, of deep adoration. "They're growing inside you."

George's eyes widened slightly as Dream's words sunk in, and he placed his paws on Dream's broad chest, his fingers curling lightly into the thick fur as a shaky sigh slipped from his lips. He tilted his head forwards until his forehead joined his hands on Dream's chest, feeling the heartbeat under his skin. "I am with pups," George repeated softly, as if he was both unsure of that fact and had never been more sure of anything in his life. It felt like a confession somehow, one woven with stardust and witnessed by no one but George and Dream, hidden from even the gods themselves. For this must be the furthest from the divine, cursed and cast away, abandoned by holiness in the depths of the devil-beast's forest. And yet, George felt more blessed than he could imagine being anywhere else. Was this not heaven? This feeling of safety and comfort, this sense of belonging? This home they had created? This was heaven enough, George thought, and if the light of the divine shone from anywhere else, he didn't care to be there. This was heaven. This was enough.

"There is no one else I'd want more to carry my pups," Dream assured, soft and determined. "You are my only, my true mate."

He nudged ever-so gently at George's stomach with his snout, looking up at him with a questioning gaze before raising his head again. "Is there more to come? Are you still sick?"

George paused to press lightly at his belly once more, searching within himself for any indication he might still need to throw up. "No," He finally replied after a moment. "I'm okay now. Empty."

Dream hummed, the quiet rumble in his chest sounding like thunder distant enough to not feel like a threat, no lightning to be seen. "I'll bury this, then we can go to the stream. The water is fresh, drinking it will help you feel better. Your throat must hurt, right darling?"

"Mm," George responded with a hum of his own. Sometimes words were unnecessary, and every day it felt more like Dream was able to read his mind as easily as he had taken control of it. He watched as the beast turned back towards the hole in the ground, stepping away from George as he kicked the pile of dirt up, covering the hole along with the traces of George's sickness, letting it be absorbed by the earth. How many more times would they have to do this? George looked down at his own belly, tracing absent circles over the skin with his paw. Something about the sight of it, of the memory of Dream's words and promises and of the sense that he was no longer quite alone even in his own body, it made soft warmth in his chest unfurl like petals, made butterfly wings woven of fragile fate and future flutter in fleeting dances between his heart and lungs. It was change, it was hope and excitement, it tasted like sour bile and sweet honeysuckle all at once, and George, trapped in a mind both so different and not so dissimilar from that which he used to have before, couldn't get enough.

Dream's presence filled his senses with the gentle curve of a much larger body around his own,

and George opened his eyes to look up at the beast. When had he closed them? A gaze of quiet viridian met his own, and, wordlessly, Dream lay down and gave a slow flick of his head, a silent invitation for George to climb onto his back. A choice, technically, but not one that George would take any time to consider. He climbed atop Dream's broad, soft back, gripping to the fur as best he could to settle his balance as the beast stood up onto all fours and started padding through the trees in long, steady strides.

It wasn't far to the stream, but the short, peaceful walk gave George's stomach the chance to settle, ceasing its uncomfortable churning and letting him sigh through breaths of clean, cool air yet untampered by the stuffiness of summer. It wasn't so late as even midday, George could tell from glances of the sun's position in the sky he managed to catch in the cracks between the sprawling branches above him. It was odd somehow, to be able to take a guess at the time of day again. He still couldn't fathom how many months he'd been cut off from humanity. There existed no draw back to that humanity now, either. That wasn't him. He didn't belong there, and anything within him that would have told him otherwise was far, far gone now. If he was completely disconnected from the life he used to have, well, he was content with that. Nothing told him otherwise.

The glimmering silver ribbon of the stream came into view as it snaked between the trees and rocks ahead of them, embedded shallowly into the dirt and scattered with tiny flowers and delicate greenery along its banks. Dream stopped in front of it, crouching to let George slide carefully off his back, then nudged the man forwards with a light push of his snout. "Drink," He urged gently. "The water is clean and cold."

And it was. It shimmered, crystal-clear as George knelt on the bank of the stream and cupped the liquid in his hands, bringing it to his lips and drinking it greedily, letting it slip down to soothe his sore throat and rid his mouth of the acrid taste that still clung to his tongue. He drank his fill, then sat back and basked in the atmosphere of the forest around him, watching from the corner of his eye how Dream took a cautious glance at their surroundings before dipping his head down to drink for himself.

This was domesticity, wasn't it? An odd kind, to be sure, but their own kind. Domesticity nonetheless. George watched Dream lapping at the stream, his tail swishing languidly in the air behind him and brushing against the ferns that sprouted from the bases of the nearby trees. It was domesticity, and it was contentment, and it was the expectancy of more to come. Dream finished drinking and looked back to George, who nodded, satisfied, and stood up to make his climb up onto Dream's back to make the journey home. It was easy.

They turned back the way they came, setting off on the short trail towards home. George sunk his weight into the comfortable furred planes of Dream's back, a sense of floatiness coming to his head even without the encouragement of sweet smells or hypnotic green. His body felt so heavy, his mind felt so light, and the imbalance was exhausting in a way that George couldn't quite make sense of.

"Are you okay, Georgie?" Dream's voice snapped him back into reality if only for a moment. "Did the water help?"

"I- Mhm," George confirmed, slightly unsure as he was with the way his body felt like bricks of lead were weighting his fragile limbs. "Feel less sick now. Just feel... Strange. Tired." He shrugged halfheartedly from where his shoulders were lying against fur, shifting subtly with each movement of Dream's muscles flexing under the skin. "Hungry, maybe." The floatiness was almost dizzying, and he pressed his eyes closed in a feeble attempt to bring himself back down to earth. "Want to lay with you."

“Of course,” Dream agreed quickly. “When we get home you can feed, then of course you may lay with me.” His voice matched the forest, George thought idly, his lips curling upwards fondly at the thought. Deep, earthy, echoing with years long past. Painted rich green. It was audible to George only over the rustle of the leaves and the whispers of creatures that scattered with each of Dream’s sure footsteps along natural-formed trails. “Anything for you, my darling.”

Anything.

Anything was so much. Dream would surely have never given anything when he first took George into his lair. Then, he was all take. He took what he liked from George, he shaped him and molded him and dragged him deeper and further, never stopping until he was satisfied with the way he held George’s mind between his claws. Now, only when the man was broken beyond humanity, was Dream willing to give. Perhaps, if George wasn’t so distracted by the comfort of honeysuckle and the ache in his belly, didn’t have his thoughts tangled in creeping vines of green promises, threats hidden and forgotten about under thin threaded golden veils, perhaps he’d be able to see just how far he’d fallen.

Cool grey stones stood out against the backdrop of woody browns and greens as the ruins came back into view. Home.

They followed the familiar routine; Dream ducking under the archway, making his way over the ledge and dropping down through the centre of the room to land smoothly on the floor below, his gently glowing horns and tail spade lighting up the space around them in a bubble of emerald light that pushed the inky shadows back to the corners.

George was quick to move to settle in their bed as soon as Dream placed him down. Tiredness still saturated his bones, despite his mostly lack of activity so far today, and he felt content to curl up on the straw, wrapping himself in the warm wool blanket Dream had previously given him while he watched the beast plod around the room and rummage through the pile of items. He guessed Dream was looking for food to give him, a suspicion that was confirmed as he saw him crush vegetables into a wooden bowl, using a tentacle to stir it into a paste before approaching George with the meal.

George smiled fondly as he took the bowl in his careful paws. “Thank you, Dream.”

“It’s enough to satisfy your hunger, I hope,” Dream replied, taking care not to step on George’s tail as he settled on the bed around him, stretching himself in a cosy ring around his mate and tucking his paws against George’s sides, rumpling the blanket slightly. “Next time I go hunting I’ll bring you back some meat if you wish.”

“Meat?” George paused his eating as the implications of Dream’s statement sunk in. He knew what kind of meat Dream ate, he just found it easier not to think about it, especially now he had his love in his mind and his pups in his belly.

Dream tilted his head. “A deer, or a rabbit maybe. Your hunger will be more soon, too much for vegetables alone to be enough. I can feed you myself, but you’d prefer human food I’m sure.”

“Oh... Yes,” George relaxed a little at the clarification, pressing the bowl to his lips once more and slumping back into Dream’s warm arms. “I will be... more hungry soon I suppose.”

Dream nuzzled gently against his cheek and licked his neck in lieu of a response, and George basked in the casual affection. Dream was often affectionate, trading the burning scrape of claws for tender, soothing touches, but each sweet caress this time felt as if it was laced with a sense of quiet excitement, of golden happiness and shining pride. It was infectious, and George found

himself dropping a paw to trace over his not-yet swollen belly as soon as he finished his food and placed the bowl down an arm's reach away from the bed, his mind wandering to thoughts of seeing it grow, of feeling similar pride and excitement for the pups growing inside him.

It was to these not-so distant fantasies that George slowly drifted off, surrounded by comfort and warmth; surrounded by Dream and filled with both lovely thoughts and wonderful realities of the future that stretched out like a vow in front of him. The beast's head rested lovingly on his shoulder, fur tickling pleasantly at his skin. He could feel it when Dream smiled, the action making him hum contentedly as he slipped into the embrace of sleep.

“Sleep well, Georgie.”

make my eyes see through kaleidoscopes

Chapter Notes

we have a special visitor this chapter!

this chapter took a little while due to me not being completely happy with it, so i ended up rewriting parts and adding to it.
as always, thank you so much for being patient <3 hope you enjoy!

As George awoke, he could appreciate that it was only to the calming rise-and-fall of Dream's chest as the beast slept peacefully, rather than to the rolling waves of nausea assaulting his stomach that he had become accustomed to over the days. He was tired, always tired, and he was weary from so many mornings spent crouched on the forest floor over a hastily dug hole in the dirt, spilling his stomach contents before begging Dream to take him back home and comfort him with words of praise and gentle, soothing touches.

This morning, he was free. He could breathe easier once again.

He sighed, grateful for the respite, and pressed his forehead against Dream's thick fur, feeling the firm lines of the beast's ribs under the skin, and beneath those, the steady thud of his heartbeat. George's own was a little too quick to match the rhythm, relaxed though he was as he hovered his paw over his chest, but he was content to listen to the organs beat in tandem as he lay basking in the quiet atmosphere of the morning. He was hungry, a not unusual occurrence lately, however he didn't feel ready to wake Dream up and have him leave just yet. In another state of mind, perhaps George might have been embarrassed at how much of his comfort he sought from just being in close proximity to his mate, from being able to see and feel and smell the beast as he doted on George and catered to his every need. As it was, any time spent apart left George tearful and needy, mourning the distance from Dream and clinging desperately to him whenever he returned.

Soft grunts and the shifting of the arms surrounding him let George guess the beast was awakening now, a suspicion that was confirmed when a huge mouth filled with razor-sharp teeth and a glowing green tongue let loose an enormous yawn right next to George's head, hot breath fanning the side of his face.

"Good morning my love," Dream hummed as he blinked his eyes open, following his greeting with a gentle lick to George's cheek. "Are you feeling better? You haven't woken me today, so I presume you have not needed to be sick yet."

George preened at the affectionate gesture. "I think I'm feeling better, yeah. It doesn't hurt so much now- My stomach, I mean. Doesn't feel like I need to be sick." He breathed out in a weary, heavy sigh. "M' sorry you had to take care of me like that when I was sick."

Dream shook his head, searching with his tail to find George's own before intertwining them together. "It's no fault of your own, you don't need to apologise. I'm only too happy to take care of you, my darling, no matter what you need. After all, you're filled with *my* pups." He moved his head slowly down George's body, brushing fur against his arm in a way that was almost ticklish, until he came to a stop next to the man's pale belly. He nosed carefully at it, nuzzling gently at the pouch of fat that was growing there and licking the skin affectionately. He purred quietly when

George placed a paw on his head and scratched lightly at the base of his horns, and a look of pride settled on his features. "It's my duty to look after you all."

George smiled and squeezed their tails a little tighter together, letting Dream's silky words wash over him in a sunkissed wave, warm and sweet. It felt lovely, it felt right, to be growing his mate's pups inside him and to be cared for so lovingly like this. The paw that wasn't petting the fur atop Dream's head slipped down to rest on his belly, brushing careful fingers over the bump that wasn't showing just yet. It was just a pouch of fat around and below his navel, almost hidden by the fact his stomach was already much softer than it used to be. He wondered how much longer it would be until he really began showing. How many pups did he have growing inside him? Eventually it would be impossible to hide, impossible to ignore, and the thought of being able to run his paws over a big, smooth bump in his belly filled George with anticipation and longing.

Basking in the presence of each other was enough for a while, wrapped in their own bubble of homely warmth and honeysuckle peace. Eventually, though, Dream's ear pricked at the sound of George's stomach grumbling, George mumbled something about being hungry, and Dream nodded a willing confirmation and untangled himself from their embrace, standing up to go fetch food he'd left in the corner after yesterday's successful hunting session.

George still didn't know how Dream had managed to cook the meat he'd brought back for him. Nor what kind of meat it was. It was fine. It tasted like deer. George was fine with eating deer.

Dream didn't eat any of the deer meat. George guessed he'd already eaten.

It was as George finished eating and was licking his paws clean of the leftover meat juices that he turned to Dream, ready to ask him if they might be able to visit the hot spring again. His back was beginning to ache, and he craved the warm water and the shimmers of sunbeams over the rocks.

He froze when he saw Dream standing stock-still on all fours with a stony expression, his head in the air and his ears perked up, clearly on high alert and listening out for something, locked onto a sound George couldn't quite pick up on.

"Dream?" He whispered, suddenly scared to make too much noise for fear of being heard by whatever Dream was watching out for.

"Get behind me, Georgie," Dream snapped, hushed and urgent though not unkind. "Cover yourself with the blanket, don't let them see you." He raised his nose a little higher, trying to catch a scent. "Whatever, or whoever it is, they're downwind. I can't smell them yet."

George followed the commands silently, shuffling further behind Dream and curling up to hide in the beast's shadow, tucking the blanket up to his neck and pulling it over his head like a hood to cover the blue glow from his horns. He watched as Dream adjusted his stance, crowding into the corner to better hide George behind him and pulling his lips back to show his teeth, growling softly as he raised the hair on his back to seem even bigger. George would probably have been turned on if he wasn't so terrified. Dream almost never reacted like this; whatever was out there definitely wasn't just a regular forest animal. George could hear its footsteps getting louder as it came closer, the sounds of it pushing plants and vines aside and the scrape of what sounded like claws against stone. Eerily similar to the noise Dream made when entering the ruins, though far less cautious, a little clumsier and unfamiliar.

A glowing, fiery orange pair of eyes stared down from the ledge above, narrowed as if peering into the darkness for a second before the owner dropped down through the hole, landing with a thump on the stone floor. Time seemed to stop for a moment before the room was lit up with a blazing glow of orange light that contrasted Dream's own bright green, and the visitor came into view with

the reveal of their own vibrant curved horns, a sharp tail spade and a set of spikes or spines that followed the ridge of their spine, all the same wildfire orange as their eyes. They were a devil-beast for sure, smaller than Dream but not by much, with a coat of fur maybe a shade darker and a touch scruffier, singe-marks at the tips of their ears and where their fur was longest, barely visible at the edges of the shadows. The acrid scent of smoke and citrus clung to the air around them. They grinned, and their sharp teeth glinted dangerously in the light.

George's breath caught in his throat.

The seconds that passed felt like a millennia, tension thick in the air and heavy as lead. Then-

"Dream!" The unexpected visitor exclaimed, in a voice much less threatening and much more cheerful than George was expecting. "I haven't seen you in so long!"

Dream huffed, his position clearly relaxing a little, but he didn't budge from where he stood. "Back off, Sapnap. You're a welcome sight, but don't come any closer."

The visitor- Sapnap? - didn't seem phased in the slightest, instead taking a step forwards and sniffing the air loudly.

"Something smells different. What changed? I know it's not you, you still stink of honey and cherries or whatever it is. Oh! You've grown since I last saw you, too! Wait..." Sapnap's head tilted slightly, eyes narrowed again as they looked carefully at Dream. "Did you- Have you mated? You have, haven't you?" They laughed, tail swinging behind them as their chest shook. "I didn't expect you to have found a mate already! Proud of you, brother."

Brother?

Dream sighed, not on his guard anymore but clearly a little weary of Sapnap's loud enthusiasm. "Yes, now will you please back off a bit? I don't want you scaring my mate when he's with pups."

"Scaring him? Your mate is here?" Sapnap started craning his neck to look around Dream, trying to catch a glimpse of what was hidden behind him. "Wait, your mate is with pups? Already? Skies above, Dream, I didn't think it had been that long! How did you even find a mate? I thought there weren't any others around! Not unless you travelled for many moons, at least..."

Sapnap's words faded into the background as Dream instead turned to face George, dipping his head to his level and dropping his voice to a soft mumble, his words reserved for just the two of them. "Are you okay with this, Georgie? With him seeing you? You're *my* mate, he's not going to hurt you. He'd be dead if he even dared." He was almost terrifyingly sincere.

George nodded slowly, reaching a hand up to scratch gently at the fur of Dream's cheek and producing a quiet, pleased purr in response. "I trust you," He whispered in turn. "He can see me, I know you'll protect me." Dream hummed, flicking his tongue out to press it briefly against George's lips in a short kiss, then turning back around to face the other beast in the room.

"You can see my mate, Sapnap. Just don't come any closer."

Sapnap snorted in confirmation, an eager huff that Dream answered with a similar noise of his own as he stepped cautiously to one side, allowing Sapnap to see George fully as the man shyly lowered the blanket off his head and upper body. The visitor's fiery eyes widened as he took in the sight before him, taking maybe one step forwards to sniff tentatively with his nose in George's direction before whipping his head back around to face Dream.

"You have a *human* mate!?"

Dream bared his teeth slightly, clearly restraining himself from letting loose with a more aggressive warning for Sapnap to back off. Sapnap seemed to take the hint, thankfully, backing up by a few steps while still looking to his brother for a response. Dream was able to relax then, swishing his tail behind him and raising his head, speaking with a sense of pride.

“He was perfect for me, I couldn’t just waste the opportunity by feeding on him,” Dream glanced back at George, a pleased grin stretched across his face making the man feel simultaneously very appreciated and very small. George was fragile, and both he and Dream knew that all too well. “So I filled him with my pups instead. He doesn’t belong to the humans anymore, he belongs to *me* now.”

The possessiveness of Dream’s words was addicting, threading itself through George’s broken mind in strings of green and gold.

Sapnap nodded, humming in contemplation. Slightly tense silence hung in the air for a moment before he spoke again. “You followed mother’s advice then?”

“What choice did I have? What choice do any of us have, Sapnap? Mother was right when she told us this was the best chance we had at breeding. There aren’t enough of us! Aside from our litter, there are none of us for many moons’ travel. This is our best hope. Mother knew that, and now we know it too. Of course I followed her advice!”

“Do you think... The pups, will they be protected? Will they...” Sapnap narrowed his eyes at George slightly. “Look normal?”

“Yes.” Dream’s answer was quick, confident. “They will look like any other pups, I can be sure of that. As for them being protected... As long as what mother said was correct, they will be. We can’t afford to doubt that right now.”

“I was never sure. You know what the elders said. Did they not know of the suggestion themselves?”

An almost incredulous snort. “Did you think the elders would accept a new idea like that? They’re too preoccupied with their own idea of keeping the species pure - they can’t even see how few of us there are left. We’d die out entirely if we did it their way. Their fears seem unfounded, regardless. Mother knew what was best for us, even if the elders didn’t listen.”

“Mm.” Sapnap sounded thoughtful. “I should find a mate of my own soon. If you’ve done so well with a human I might try it too.”

Another? Another human would go through this too? Had George’s mind not been frayed so far past reason, his humanity dissolved like sugar on a tongue, he’d perhaps have been horrified that another human would be dragged into the same nightmare life; that they’d fall prey to this other beast, be drugged and violated and changed past all recognition. As it was, all George felt was a calm acceptance, his shock sedated beneath layered veils; soft fur and something other than dread growing low in his belly.

Dream barked out a laugh. “Don’t you still live in the scorched wastes? I’m surprised you can find food at all, never mind a suitable mate.”

Sapnap chuckled in response, stretching his body out a little before laying down on the floor and settling until he was comfortable, with his paws pushed out to one side. “You’d be surprised. They come through hunting for the phoenixes that live on the cliffs there.” He grinned. “They never make it as far as that, but it doesn’t stop them. I eat well.”

Dream nodded; able to relax now that Sapnap was settled he sat down and curled his tail gently around George's back, keeping him within a protective loop. "Hunting in this forest is easy, humans travel through it all the time. There's a village nearby but I don't even have to venture near it to find prey. George was one of the travellers," He turned his head to face George, a razor-sharp grin glinting in the green and orange light. "Isn't that right, Georgie? I didn't even have to leave home to find you, you came right to me."

Memories of stumbling through the forest, exhausted and desperate for shelter, of throwing his weary body with relief through the door of the ruins, of collapsing against the wall prepared to wait out the night. They were hazy, silver mist and indigo shadow obscuring them beneath months' worth of Dream's love. Much clearer among George's shards of thought were the other remnants of that night. Darkness, a pit into seemingly nothing, a voice, deep and echoing, haunting in the way it seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere at once, haunting in George's tired mind and accompanied by honeysuckle and rich fruit. Nothing, nothing, darkness and slumber and nothing else after that, not hope nor respite nor even the security of a clear head.

Sapnap's reply broke through the glassy memories to draw George back to reality.

"How did you capture him so easily anyway? Humans always tend to run until you sink your claws into them or snap their neck or whatever else. You made him stay without crippling him?"

Dream tilted his head to one side, George confused with his lack of response until a very familiar scent permeated the air around him, being dragged heavy into his lungs with his every breath and soaking his bones with drowsiness. He slumped back a little, honeysuckle sweetness fogging his head and glowing in tangerine embers beneath his belly until George had to blink away the heat-haze in front of his eyes, focusing on the conversation in front of him seeming like an effort. He could make out Dream's next words, laced with a satisfied smile and buzzing pleasantly in George's head.

"It affects them so strongly, see? My flame-fuel... I mix it with my normal scent or my mating scent. It works so well on humans. Even when the mating scent is weaker they get needy - it seems similar to a heat. Strong enough, and they fall asleep. Look at George."

George could feel the second pair of eyes on him as Sapnap peered past Dream to see for himself. Dream had seemingly stopped releasing the scent, but it was taking time for the air - and his head - to clear from the warm, sweet fuzziness. Sapnap seemed entirely unaffected.

"So *that's* what you've been doing with your flame-fuel, brother?" Sapnap laughed. "You've never been so good at breathing fire. I'm surprised it can be used like that, but of course *you'd* find another use for it. I'm glad." He glanced at George again, tilting his head in thought and curiosity. "Hey, Dream's mate!"

"Hm?" George made a soft noise as he looked up at Sapnap, still struggling against the drowsiness fogging his mind.

"Have you not seen Dream breathe flame yet?" He turned his head towards Dream before even waiting for an answer. "You haven't done it the whole time you've been with him?"

"I've used it to cook meat for him. Humans prefer it like that, it seems."

"Oh? I didn't know that. That seems odd, why would you not want it fresh? Anyway," Sapnap turned back to George, who was left behind a bit by just how fast the beast was talking. "Have you not seen it then? Even now?"

“It isn’t as if I courted him the usual way. I’ve used my scent much more than my flame.”

“No, I haven’t seen it,” George managed to say through a mouth that wasn’t quite listening to his brain’s hazy, green-tinted instructions. Dream and Sapnap both turned their heads to look at him. “Can... Could I see it, Dream?”

Dream looked surprisingly sheepish. “As Sapnap said, I’ve never been as good at it as he is. It’s not so impressive.”

George’s “I’d still like to see it,” was almost drowned out by Sapnap’s accompanying cheer of “Yes, show him now, Dream!”

“Very well, I will try.” Dream stood up and turned to face to the side, away from George’s direction, at the same time as Sapnap stepped back to allow his brother more room. Dream lifted his head and made some kind of quiet coughing noise in his throat, which George could just about see moving, mostly obscured by the thick fur on his neck. It took maybe a few seconds before Dream dropped his head again, snorting air in through his nose before releasing a stream of bright fire from the back of his mouth. Brief flashes of green between his teeth burned into blazing orange and copper, the flames licking at the stones of the floor and leaving behind dark scorch marks before fading into nothing but a ripple of residual heat.

Dream hummed in satisfaction. “Not much, you see. It is still enough to cook meat, and I don’t need it for much else besides.”

“Mine is better,” Sapnap boasted, already rearing his head up and puffing his chest out seemingly in preparation to show off. “Watch this!”

His throat moved as if he was gulping for a second, before he let loose with a fireball far outshining Dream’s effort, enormous flames that George felt the sheer power and heat of flicker against his bare skin, enough to burn him had Dream not been acting as a shield. George clenched his eyes shut against the scorching heat and bright light, hearing the continuous roar of the blaze for a few seconds more before it faded into the silence and shadow of the ruin.

“See?” Sapnap’s smug voice broke the silence as George dared to open his eyes again. “Any mate would be impressed by that. I could court anyone!”

“Sapnap!” Dream almost roared, his tone stained with exasperation alongside veiled anger and hurt. “You must be more careful!”

“What?”

Dream shook his head. “You could have hurt him! You must know that humans can be burned, surely?”

“Well yes, of course I knew that, but...” Sapnap trailed off as he looked towards George. “He’s not fully human. I thought that- you know, that he’d be immune or something.”

Dream sighed. “He’s not fully like us either.” He turned his head back towards George then, scanning over his body for any injuries or burns. His voice dropped lower, softer as he regarded him. “You’re not hurt, are you darling?” He seemed satisfied with George’s responding shake of the head, smiling gently before glancing in Sapnap’s direction. “He didn’t intend you any harm, I know that much for sure. He only needs to watch his step sometimes, so to speak.”

George made a soft noise and relaxed as Dream sat back down once more, curling their tails together quietly.

Across from them, Sapnap settled back down on the floor too, waving his own tail slowly in the air behind him.

“Anyway, I like your scent technique Dream, though I’m not sure I’d be able to do the same. I prefer being able to breathe fire. I’ll have to find some other way to make a human stay long enough for me to mate with them.”

“Your tentacles will help. You can hold a human up or pin them down with them. Not to mention feeding them to transform them however you may like. George used his hands to try escaping until I gave him paws. And besides,” Dream glanced back at George, pride evident on his face. “He’s much more suited to mother my pups now.”

George placed a paw gently on his stomach, stroking over the slowly growing pouch of fat with quiet fondness. He was a good mate, wasn’t he? He was changed, shaped, transformed to Dream’s likeness, molded into the perfect mother for Dream’s pups. And now they were growing within him. He was good, he was happy.

“I’m glad you’ve found such a perfect mate, Dream.” Sapnap’s smile seemed genuine. “I hope your pups are born healthy and strong. I can only hope that I will get the same eventually.”

“You’ll find a good mate, I know it. You are plenty strong enough.”

“Mm, I hope you’re right. Who knows, maybe someday I shall be bringing my pups to visit you!”

Dream laughed. “And the same to you! I promise I will not let it go so long before I visit you again, and I shall bring my pups if I can. They would love to visit their uncle, I’m sure.”

Sapnap grinned, standing up from his position and stepping forward to give Dream a quick, sloppy lick on the cheek before backing up to a non-threatening distance from both him and George. “It’s been good to see you, brother! I was going to ask if you wanted to go hunting together, but...” He glanced at George. “I suppose you would not want to leave your pregnant mate alone for long. Another time, maybe?”

Dream nodded, his tone friendly and warm. “I’d like that.”

He returned Sapnap’s gesture, before stepping back to give the other beast room to leap up to the floor above.

George managed to find enough function in his thoughts and mouth to bid a farewell to the visiting beast, giving a sleepy smile as he did so. “It was nice to meet you, Sapnap.”

The beast in question whipped his head to look at George, his grin excited and infectious. “And the same to you! I hope I may find a mate like you for myself.”

He looked back up towards the ledge and crouched in preparation to jump.

“I wish you and your mate all the best, Dream!”

And with a swing of his tail and a swift leap, Sapnap was gone. A bright orange glow slowly faded out of sight at the same time his parting words echoed faintly back through the ruins as he slunk out through the door: “Your mate looks delicious, by the way!”

George, still rendered less than fully conscious by Dream’s earlier scent demonstration, lay still and listened until the sound of Sapnap’s footsteps faded like his fiery glow back into the quiet forest outside. A soft sigh slipped from his lips as he settled back into the embrace of Dream’s tail,

still wrapped loosely around him, and his eyes fell onto the beast as he stood staring up at the space Sapnap had left.

It took a moment until it was obvious Dream could neither see, hear nor smell Sapnap anymore, and the beast huffed quietly and turned his attention back to George.

“I apologise for that being so unexpected. Sapnap and I visit each other occasionally, and we aren’t in the habit of giving prior warning. I suppose he wasn’t expecting that I’d have a mate with me this time.” He leaned down to nuzzle George’s cheek gently. “I hope he didn’t scare you. I wouldn’t let you get hurt, you know that.”

“No, I’m okay,” George mumbled, softening into the caress. “I know you’d protect me. He was... Your brother, right?”

Dream hummed softly, shuffling over to sit next to George on the bed, curling up comfortably. “Yes, we were litter-mates. Sapnap is my closest living sibling, so we visit each other and go hunting together on occasion. It was nice to see him again.”

“It must be nice,” George agreed. “I never had any siblings, I used to just play with other kids in my village instead,” He laid a paw over his soft belly. “I hope our pups will stay close.”

Dream nodded, smiling. “There were seven of us. I don’t know how our mother handled us so well.” His eyes flicked up towards the floor above for a second, gazing wistfully into the pale, thin light of late afternoon that filtered through the stone archways. “I remember once how Sapnap wandered away while playing because he was following a bird. Mother was in such a worry doing her best to search for him while still protecting the rest of us. I ran off to look for him myself, and I eventually found him trying to cough flames at the tree the bird was sitting in.” He chuckled. “None of us could really breathe fire yet, but it didn’t stop Sapnap from trying. Mother was so relieved when she saw us coming back to the den. She did a wonderful job at protecting us.”

A thought suddenly stuck out in George’s head, an echo of Sapnap’s earlier words. “When you said our pups would be protected, what did you mean? I... Get the feeling that you meant more than just you- or me- physically protecting them from harm.” It worried George to an almost surprising extent, the thought of his- no, *their* pups coming to harm in some way, by something out of his control. He was already so scared for their safety, so determined to keep them close to him. Was this what being a mother was like? Was he already so attached to his unborn that he was feeling the encroaching worry and fear that they’d be torn away from him somehow? The paw he kept placed against his belly helped in some small way, soothing his harried mind and hushing his fears. They were still so small, so deep inside him. They were safe. They were close.

Dream sighed, a small frown settling on his features. “Too many of my species’ pups have been taken by the human beast-slayers. They travel to hunt us down. Their spells don’t work effectively against us when we’re grown, but...” He dipped his head, pressing his nose gently to the soft skin of George’s belly, as if comforting himself in a similar way to George. “The pups are weaker, more vulnerable. The spells can kill them easily. The slayers know that, so they target the pups. As much as we try to shield them, there’s only so much we can do. It’s why we were almost wiped out.”

“So when you said...”

The beast smiled, cautious but hopeful as he lifted his head to look George in the eye as he spoke. “Ours will be protected, yes. I choose to believe what my mother taught me - she told us about everything we could do for our own pups that she was not able to do for us. I’d be betraying her if I never tested her advice, for all our sakes. She taught us that while humans may seem like only our food and our downfall, they may be the key to our survival too.”

His smile turned up at the corners slightly, a shadow of a smirk. “That’s why you’re my mate, Georgie. Feeding on humans helps give us our grown immunity to the slayers’ spells. Mother suggested - informed by whispers between the few of us left - that pups born of both our blood *and human blood* may be naturally protected from any spells the slayers can possibly attack us with.”

George’s eyes widened, the paw that wasn’t resting on his belly going to lightly grip the fur of Dream’s tail encircling him. “So our pups will be safe?”

“If the rumours are true, I believe so. It’s the best chance we’ve got.”

“I hope so.”

“Georgie,” Dream’s voice was reassuring, but firm in its fondness. “I promise you, as long as I still live I shall protect both you, and our pups. You deserve more than the hardships my mother went through. You are mine, and I will prove that to you in every way I can.”

“I know,” George reached up then to place his hands on either side of Dream’s face, tangling his fingers gently in the silky fur beneath his paw pads and stroking with all the love of the miracles growing beneath his stomach. “And I will never doubt that.” He leaned his forehead slowly, touching it to Dream’s snout and letting his eyes slip closed, breathing in the same subtly sweet air and letting the mist of their lungs swirl in the minuscule gap between them. “I am yours.”

They stayed like that, seconds bleeding into minutes bleeding into a frame of time George has long since forgotten how to judge, until their sighs left them behind as they pressed ever closer, curling and entwining until their blend of fur was impossible to tell apart and the hum of their souls was the melody that lulled them steadily into sleep.

George bathed in it, the serenity of that moment, the sensation of slowly falling as his breathing grew slower, deeper, breaths in his lungs as waves on a shore; Dream was his every surrounding, his every remedy to the hiraeth that haunted him, his atmosphere, his elysium.

“Sleep well, Georgie,” Dream whispered, and George did.

so it goes, my mind is playing tricks on me

Chapter Notes

here's chapter 11! we're getting closer to the birth :]

as always, thank you all for being patient! enjoy this sweet fluffy chapter <3

Waking from slumber into the quiet, inky darkness of the ruins while still nestled snugly in the silky warmth of Dream's arms must be the most lovely way to wake up, George thought sleepily, even as he slowly blinked away the remnants of his lethargy that crusted the corners of his eyes. The sliver of early morning light that filtered down through the ceiling glinted gently off tiny sparkles set in the rough stone, glimmering through the soft viridian glow cast around them by Dream's own horns and by the spade on his tail, pushing back the shadows of the room like a solacing bubble of dim light; their own veneer of protection.

George turned his head to gaze upon the beast above, behind, wrapped around and surrounding him.

It was peaceful to be able to observe Dream while he was sleeping like this. His strong arms curled possessively around George's smaller form, his sharp claws visible but not turned out in aggression or unenvied defensiveness, nor turned against George himself; they simply rested there against his skin, razor-sharp yet soft with promise. His eyes were closed and he breathed gently, his chest pressing closer against George's body with each rise-and-fall. No jealousy or cruel infatuation or viscousness or even fierce protectiveness yet shaped his features in the cold daylight of the world outside; like this, Dream was soft, subdued. Vulnerable, had he been anyone else. Anything else.

George twisted his body a little in Dream's hold so he could face the beast properly, and found himself melting a little at the sight, his chest fluttering with fondness like teal hummingbird wings against honeyed petals. He reached one paw up, feeling thick fur under the pads of his own fingers as he brushed them gently against Dream's cheek. Digging his short claws into the fuzz deep enough to touch skin, his strokes turned into soothing scratches enough to draw a deep, smooth purr from Dream's sleepy chest. George smiled, soft, loving, and allowed his caresses to wander higher, up the slope of Dream's snout and over his forehead to where his first pair of horns emerged, and to the second pair shortly behind them. They were curiously velvety at the base, hardening and becoming smooth as they extended upwards, every inch of them emitting soft green light. They were a close similarity to George's pair of small horns, glowing with a warm light of their own, a blue pretty enough to match the summer sky. George liked the contrast between them, the hues to match the skies above the grassy plains. He liked Dream's green, a shade swirling and shifting somewhere between rich emerald and mint, never really settling. He didn't think he'd ever get tired of it, that beautiful shade of green.

He didn't think he'd ever get tired of this.

This gentle love, this bubble of domesticity in a place he once would never have considered could possibly hold a love, a future, a *family*. He'd never grow tired of waking in Dream's arms, surrounded entirely by all the warmth and adoration of his doting mate. And though perhaps that was at least in part due to his mind not belonging so much to himself as it once had, was it wrong of George to feel content with that? Belonging to Dream was belonging enough. Peaceful

satisfaction threaded like molten gold through flesh, blood and bone as George leaned his head closer to Dream's sleeping form, pressing his nose to the beast's neck and inhaling faint vestiges of honeysuckle, smiling softly at the familiar sweetness and the glow of embers it left behind in his stomach as he exhaled gently.

George's paw found its way back to Dream's cheek as he pulled his head back, and he scratched his fingers into the thick fur again as he instead leaned in to brush his lips over the tip of Dream's nose in a sweet kiss.

Dream stirred then, his eyes cracking open and a soft purr reverberating through his chest as he locked eyes with George, smiling gently at the sight of his mate.

"Good morning, my love," He mumbled, and George melted into warm honey.

"Dream," He replied, his eyes soft and his words no louder than a whisper, volume unneeded in the warm haze of morning. "You're awake."

"I am." The beast nuzzled his nose lightly against George's cheek, tongue poking out to leave a small lick on his soft skin. "Did you sleep well, darling?"

"I did," George hummed. "I always do, with you."

Dream's returning smile was so loving, so tender. "And I may say the same."

He shifted, carefully loosening his hold on George so he could turn the man around in his arms, maneuvering him until George was lying with his body face-up, his swollen belly on display for Dream's eager eyes.

"You're so beautiful," Dream purred, lifting a paw to brush it oh-so delicately over the bump, stroking over the smooth, soft skin with such fondness that George felt as if he might cry at the sentimentality of it all. "So pretty, full of my pups and laying here in my arms. All mine. You are the most perfect mate Georgie, you've never looked so beautiful as you do now. Look," He tapped the pad of one huge finger lightly against the swell of George's belly. "You are growing our pups inside you."

George's face broke into a wonderfully fond smile, resting his own paws on his swollen belly and imagining the litter of pups curled up inside. How many were in there? The bump was big and heavy, weighing him down and making him groan softly and reach for Dream's aid every time he wanted to stand up. His back would ache, his legs shaking when he stood up, muscles weak from disuse. He'd put weight on other than the bump, too, his thighs soft and pudgy, the flesh squishing under the gentle pressure of Dream's claws. The beast doted on him so lovingly, always returning from his short absences from the ruins with his arms laden with food for his mate; roots and berries foraged in the forest despite Dream's lack of interest in eating them himself, vegetables clearly stolen from villages and farms beyond the bounds of the forest itself, and meat bearing the deep claw marks of Dream's hunting and seared with his flame. George would devour anything Dream gave him, feasting for the family growing in his womb, everlastingly grateful for the care and affection Dream poured over him.

Contentment like warm sunlight sprung cloudy tears to his eyes, and he blinked them away with a watery smile. He truly couldn't wait to see their pups.

They'd kick sometimes, tiny paws striking at his belly from the inside and making him gasp. He'd press his paws to the spot in hopes to feel it again, giggling with excitement and calling Dream to nose gently at the skin. Every movement he felt from within him was a wonderful reminder of their

bond, of the tiny miracles in his belly that linked his and Dream's souls together with shimmering thread.

"You need to feed," Dream's gentle voice snapped George out of his reverie. "I have more changes to give you."

"Changes to my body?" George was curious what more Dream had to change about him.

The beast hummed in affirmation, nuzzling and licking softly at George's neck. "You need to be able to feed our pups once they are born."

For how eager he was to be able to raise their pups, George hadn't considered how they would feed. Though now as he considered it, the urge to nurse them himself was nagging in the back of his mind, every fibre of his being aching with the need to be motherly, to hold the pups close and give them all they needed to live and grow.

He curled his tail around Dream's arm. "How will I feed them?"

Dream smiled. "Let me show you."

A familiar tentacle slithered out from Dream's back, and George relaxed at the sight of it, snuggling further into Dream's warm arms and opening his mouth to accept the appendage. He hummed quietly as he felt the weight of it settle on his tongue and reach into his throat, and he closed his lips around it to hold it in place as he willingly swallowed down everything it pumped into his stomach.

"Good boy," He distantly heard Dream say, as he slipped into the warm, fuzzy headspace the feeding sessions always wrought. Tingling sensations spread down his chest, concentrating around his nipples and steadily bringing aches behind them. Two short pricks of pain on either side of his torso made the skin just below his chest itch and swell with a sharp heat, and he squeezed his eyes shut, giving a hiss of discomfort before Dream hushed him and stroked his shoulders reassuringly. "You're doing so well, my love."

Eventually the pain subsided into a dull, muted ache, and as the tentacle retreated from his mouth George blinked his eyes open once more, taking a moment to breathe steadily before he craned his neck to look down at his own body.

Where there had once been an expanse of smooth skin only minutes before, the skin between his chest and belly now swelled with two more pairs of nipples, each one raised up slightly in a very small bump, the pink of them a shade darker than the rest of his skin. George stared at them in quiet wonder, raising one paw to carefully brush his fingers over the new nubs. He immediately gasped and shivered at the feeling, snatching his hand away, and Dream was quick to catch him loosely by the wrist and press their paws together.

"Careful, darling," He warned gently. "They may still be sensitive."

"Mm," George agreed, still slightly distracted by the most recent change to his body. "I... can feed the pups with these?"

Dream nodded. "They will start producing milk when you get closer to the birth." He smiled adoringly. "You'll be able to feed the pups yourself, like a good mother."

Mother. George was going to be a mother. The thought filled him with elation, his heart light and glittering with hope.

Dream dipped his head down to lay it carefully over George, careful not to put any pressure on the bump, but with the fur of his ear and cheek tickling George's swollen belly. "It won't be too much longer," He murmured, flicking his eyes to meet George's gaze. "How are you feeling, Georgie?"

George chuckled lightly in response. "I can't wait. I want to be able to see and hold them... They're ours, Dream. Our pups." A thought came to him then, and he sat up in Dream's hold, shuffling until he could peer over at the straw bed below them. "I, um- I want them to be comfortable when they're born." He turned to meet Dream's eyes again, but struggled to say what he was thinking, stumbling over his words. "Could we... Uh-"

"What do you want to do, darling?" Dream's tone was patient.

George took a breath, letting the instinctual urge buzzing in his head speak for him instead. "I... want to make a nest."

Dream's eyes widened, a soft grin overtaking his face. "Of course, Georgie. There should be some more blankets in those bags over there," He nodded towards the looming pile of bones and belongings on the other side of the room. "And I can go out to fetch some more straw. I'll get you whatever you want for the nest, my love, so we can make this the best home we can for our pups."

George buried his face into Dream's fur, nuzzling his head against him in a similar manner that Dream did to show him affection. "Thank you, Dream."

A soothing lick to his neck. "Of course."

Dream placed George gently down on the bed, helping him first sit up, then providing support as George shakily got to his feet. The beast followed him in getting up from the bed, pacing for a second before lengthening his body in a prolonged stretch, yawning and flicking his tail.

He turned back to George. "Do you think you'll be okay searching for blankets here while I go to get straw?"

George nodded. "I'll be okay. I can always sit down again if I get tired."

"Okay." One final nudge of a cold nose to George's cheek, and then Dream stepped towards the centre of the room. "I promise not to take too long, Georgie."

And with a leap, Dream was gone. George listened to his footsteps fade off out of the ruins and into the forest, then sighed quietly and turned to the pile of bags and bones. There definitely had to be blankets in some of these bags, so he crouched, careful not to wobble out of balance with his belly weighing him down, and reached into the heap to rummage through packs.

It didn't take George too long to amass a small pile of thick blankets as he pushed yellowed skulls out the way to feel around in bags for bundles of knitted wool. He picked out the softest and warmest, putting them carefully to one side to add to his nest. It was odd, pushing his paws through collections of dead people's belongings to find what he wanted, the lingering thought that he could have been one of the victims lying strewn about here pushed away by the reassurance that he was Dream's *mate*, not his prey.

George glanced at the heap of blankets beside him and hummed with satisfaction. One more and it would be enough, then he could arrange them all into a nest. Shuffling along the pile a bit and reaching into it for one last time, his fingers closed around the material of a bag and he pulled it closer to him, his short claws leaving tiny indents in the leather of the strap. It was as it came clearer into view, illuminated in the blue glow of his horns, that George felt recognition flicker to

life in his head, his eyes widening slightly. That was *his bag*. The bag he'd packed with the few possessions he needed to survive, the bag he'd carried out of his village and set off through the wilderness with. The bag he'd left home with.

With eager and shaking hands, George pulled loose the string keeping the bag closed and scrambled to open it enough for a bundle of thick fabric to tumble out. He dropped the bag immediately, his attention focused entirely on the blanket as he snatched it up, feeling the softness under the pads of his paws and raising it to his face to bury his nose in the wool. It had been so long since he'd wrapped this blanket around himself, and longer still since he'd had it covering his bed back in his village, but it still smelled of him and of the home he'd come from, and the distant familiarity struck an odd chord with George as he sat there in a home far, far different than what he used to know, surrounded and covered by the scent of another.

George knelt with the blanket clutched in his paws for a long moment, the clash of his old and new homes leaving him with a hum of strange sentimentality settling under his skin. The place the blanket had come from wasn't his home anymore. It had been, once, in days before the thrill of exploration and the draw of discovery, before the search and the find and the scent of honeysuckle and the hazy desires and the blood drawn by claws gripping his flesh. It wasn't anymore, and despite the recognition in the scent, George was struggling to feel the connection he once felt towards it, towards his previous life, towards everything he'd left behind. How could he, when this was so much better, so much more?

The blanket was soft under his paws. George took a last look at it before dropping it into the pile with the others.

It would make a lovely addition to the nest.

He gathered up the blankets he'd collected into a heap in his arms, struggling for a moment to stand beneath the weight of both them and his pregnant belly, and shivering when woven wool brushed over his sensitive nipples. Heaving the pile over towards the bed seemed like an endurance test, and George was relieved when he could sit back down on the soft straw and lay the blankets around him to begin arranging them.

The foreign scents of various long-dead people clinging to the different fabrics made his nose crinkle in distaste, and George made a mental note to ask Dream to scent the blankets himself when he got back. Maybe he'd keep the blanket with his own smell of home on it, though. He'd add it to the nest as it was, a little piece of his old life amongst the new.

Building the nest was a pleasant job, George allowing instincts he didn't know he had to take over as he layered blankets up around the edges of the bed, covering the border where straw met stone. His layering became looser inside the bed itself, leaving a dip and letting George curl up with the first blanket that Dream had given him. It laid next to his own, and George smiled, satisfied with his work.

It wasn't long before the sound of claws scraping stone made George perk his head up in time to see Dream drop down through the hole in the ceiling, the pile of straw and soft grass in his arms visible in the eerie light of his accompanying green glow.

"Dream!" George called out, sitting up and swishing his tail happily at the sight of his mate. "Look at the nest I've made!"

The beast smiled in response, striding over and looking down at George sitting in the middle of the layered piles of blankets. "It looks great, George," He praised. "Perfect for our pups."

“Almost perfect,” George corrected, reaching for the grasses in Dream’s arms.

Dream chuckled softly. “Almost.”

He dropped the fresh pile of straw on the bed next to George, who giggled and shuffled back to arrange and start smoothing it down into the middle of the nest, tucking stray strands under the blanket edges. He flopped back onto it when he was finished, looking up at Dream with a fond smile on his face.

“It’s warm and comfortable,” George placed his paws on his swollen belly, stroking it absentmindedly. “The pups will love it.” He glanced away then, suddenly nervous. “Do you like it?”

Dream stepped into the nest, dipping his head down to nuzzle gently against George’s bump, before trailing his nose up past George’s nipples and over his chest to lick affectionately at his neck. “Of course I like it,” He mumbled. “You made it, darling. You made it for us and our pups.”

George gave a contented hum. “For us.” He picked up a piece of straw and played with it in his hands. “The straw smells nice, too. Where did you get it?”

Dream snorted quietly, lowering his body into the nest and being careful to tuck his legs around George. “Took it from a farm on the outskirts of the forest. No one was around.”

A laugh. “You wouldn’t have been stopped even if there was someone there.”

Dream grinned. “You’re right.”

Cuddling closer to Dream and twining their tails together, George reached for the beast’s arm and pulled it over his body, settling Dream’s huge hand gently on the swell of his belly and leaning into the touch, hoping they’d both be able to feel it if the pups kicked again. Dream was only too happy to let George position his hand, brushing his fingers lightly over the skin in a gesture of affection and soft wonder at the thought of their little family growing inside his mate. He turned his head to nuzzle his nose against George’s cheek, love like the light of sunset, steady splashes of colour, golden and beautiful against the darkening sky.

“I love you, my darling,” He murmured against George’s skin, tucking his head between George’s neck and the cosy blankets that made up the nest.

George’s face lit up with a smile to rival the sunrise, tender and bright. “And I love you too, Dreamie.”

He nuzzled his face into the fur on Dream’s chest, the fond action enough to draw a purr from the beast that rumbled against his body and filled him with soft warmth. He was already feeling sleepy, the gentle rhythm of Dream’s breathing soothing him steadily towards unconsciousness, and he only managed to mumble a goodnight to his mate before closing his eyes and slipping gratefully into slumber.

Dream chuckled quietly before closing his own eyes and curling his tail protectively around George, humming sleepily.

“Sleep well, Georgie.”

yelling the words but i'm not hearing myself

Chapter Notes

here it finally is: the birthing chapter. this might be my favourite chapter so far, we finally get to meet the pups!

as always, thank you all for being patient!! i hope you enjoy <3

// warning for graphic scenes of childbirth

Waking up wasn't so peaceful for George, not this time. A sudden spasm of sharp pain tore him from his slumber without remorse, a gasp falling from his lips as he bolted upright and clutched at his abdomen with shaking hands. A soft whimper sounded in his throat as George blinked the sleep from his eyes and pressed his paws gently to his swollen belly, the huge bump housing the cause of his discomfort.

The ruins were dark and quiet, the only light and sound coming from Dream, still snoring gently with his arms and tail curled protectively around George's form. No sunlight yet slipped through the cracks in the stone above them, nor was there any trace of silvery moonlight bright enough to filter into their sanctuary.

Sharp pain barely faded into a harsh ache that radiated through his lower back and down into his thighs, and George let out a slow, deep breath, moving his hands around to carefully massage the soft, pudgy flesh underneath the swell of his belly and around his hips in a feeble attempt to ease the cramp. This wasn't the first time he'd been awoken by pain or cramping, far from it. It had been happening for what must have been a few weeks now, twinges and aches disturbing him in the night and leaving him restless and upset. Dream, when he was awake, never minded soothing his mate with soft touches and the relieving scent of blossom and strawberries, but George was reluctant to bother the sleeping beast. He'd rub gently at his abdomen and change position, and the ache would fade until he was able to slip back into sweet slumber once more.

Something felt different this time, though.

Another jolt of pain made George cry out softly and curl in on himself, the ache a tight, squeezing pressure gripping his insides and making his back and thighs tingle as it spread downwards. He shifted and squirmed in Dream's arms, twisting his body in different directions to try to get comfortable and lessen the pain, but this time it was relentless, retaining its clutch on him for what felt like an excruciating amount of time before it lessened and allowed him to slump back with a sigh. The ache stayed, dull and persistent as he lay there running his paws over his bump and willing himself to fall back asleep. Sweat clung to his skin and his hands continued to tremble, but steadying his breathing became easier as the minutes passed by without another agonising cramp.

He wasn't so lucky that the respite would last, however. Another crushing squeeze forced him away from the distressingly close lure of sleep, and he doubled over, clenching his eyes shut and gritting his teeth as he weathered the worst of it, the unpleasant ache still lingering even after the most painful of the pressure had subsided. Tears pricked at the corners of his eyes and George shook his head to will them away, trying to focus on falling asleep once more.

It was after the next one that he decided he couldn't take it anymore.

"Dream," He pleaded, reluctantly letting go of his belly to instead try and shake the beast awake. "Wake up please, it hurts."

He tugged on Dream's thick fur in hopes of getting a reaction more than just a sleepy grunt or snuffle, and finally Dream cracked his eyes open, slowly blinking a few times before gently touching his nose to George's cheek in an affectionate greeting.

"Are you okay, Georgie?" His voice was rough with sleep but still caring, attentive to George and concerned about the obvious distress present on his features. "Are you in pain?"

"Yes, please Dream, I need your- the- the strawberry scent. Please, it hurts. It's... worse than usual tonight."

"It's okay darling, I've got you. Come here," Dream pulled George closer, placing one huge hand on the back of George's head to guide his face towards the scent glands buried in the fur on Dream's neck. "Breathe in slowly for me, just like always... There you go, good boy."

George was all too eager to bask in the sweet haze of blossom and berries, inhaling it deeply and letting it linger in his lungs until the fierce ache was muted beneath sugared nerves and layers of pleasant, floaty numbness. He could still feel it there, the pressure in his lower abdomen, but it no longer made him squirm with discomfort and clench his eyes shut hard, and he settled against the warm firmness of Dream's body with relief.

"Thank you," He murmured. "It hurt worse than it usually does. I think... Something about it feels different tonight. Even when I moved around or massaged it, it didn't make any difference."

Dream perked up a little at that, his expression twisting into thoughtfulness as he brushed his fingers lightly over George's belly bump. "It feels different? Do you think it may be time?"

"Time?"

"For the pups to be born." Dream's voice was laced with excitement, even as he kept his volume steady, low enough to match the quiet of the night. "Do you think it is? Are they coming?"

George's eyes widened, and he moved his paw to place it over Dream's in caressing his belly. "I don't know... I mean, I've obviously never-" He cut himself off and glanced away for a moment, before looking back down at their paws and the swell of their pups in his belly underneath. His words were a soft, fond mumble. "I hope so."

Dream smiled. "We will find out." He gathered George in his warm arms once more, laying them both down and letting the man get comfortable in a position that didn't put any more pressure on his belly. "Let me know if you need any more relief, okay darling?"

"Mm, I will." George settled down, intertwining his tail with Dream's and squeezing his paw. "It feels better now than it did without the- Ah!"

His body shivered almost violently as another painful squeeze forced his guts into knots and made his toes curl as he bit his lip to stop himself whimpering. It was less intense this time, Dream's soothing scent dampening the pain, but it still made him writhe with discomfort until it finally subsided. George gripped Dream's paw tightly until he felt like he could breathe again, the beast nuzzling his snout against George and waiting patiently until he recovered, muttering comforts to him all the while.

George looked up through the sweaty hair that fell over his forehead as he panted, shivering with the aches in his body, and met eyes with Dream, who gently brushed the offending hair away from his face and gave him a soft smile.

“I can’t make that scent any stronger, Georgie, I’m sorry you are still in pain.” He dipped his head to lick George’s neck. “The contractions will go on for a while I’m afraid... Would you like me to help distract you?”

“Distract..? Yes, please Dream, anything! I just-” He curled his arms around himself. “I want it to stop hurting. Please, distract me.”

“Anything for you, my love.”

George mourned the loss of Dream’s touch as the beast carefully laid him down on his back on the bed and pressed a kiss in the form of a small lick against the swell of his belly as he moved downwards, sitting and settling down next to George’s legs instead.

“What... are you doing, Dream?” Confusion seeped into George’s tone, and he went to sit up and reach for the beast before he was gently pulled back down by a tentacle that emerged from the bed beneath him and curled around his torso.

“Stay there darling, I want you to be comfortable. I’ll take care of you.” Dream punctuated his soft words with nuzzles and licks that were almost ticklish against the warm skin of George’s chubby thighs.

George relaxed with his mate’s reassurances, enjoying the caresses and the way Dream’s hot breath fanned over his skin. He squeezed his tail where it was still wrapped around Dream’s in a gesture of affection, trusting the beast wholly with his body and pleasure.

He sucked in a breath when Dream’s tongue lapped slowly, carefully at the sensitive head of his cock, his mate tasting his neediness and savouring his resulting whine like a full meal. Dream’s tongue was huge, and as smooth, slick muscle enveloped the tip of his cock, George could recall how it had felt curling and twisting up inside of him, its incredible warmth filling him and pressing at his sensitive walls until he could only sob and push his hips into the sensation. This time, George could feel the appendage slip further out of the beast’s mouth, stretching out to its full length as it curled itself around his shaft, George throwing his head back and keening at the way it squeezed lightly around him, coating his cock in Dream’s saliva and pushing him up to full hardness.

Dream hummed and let the tip of his tongue dip against George’s slit, pulling a moan from his mate’s throat and making him writhe where he was still held down.

“Oh, oh Dream, p-please-”

George could barely feel the next contraction that wracked his body, too caught up in the pleasure that buzzed through him when Dream uncurled his tongue from around George’s cock for a moment, only to dip his head and breathe, hot and wet, over the length of it, razor-sharp teeth coming dangerously close to fragile flesh before pulling back and being replaced with the slick tentacle once more. Dream seemed to savour every one of George’s gasps and soft moans as his tongue laved slowly over blush pink skin as if in prayer, a worship of his mate’s honeyed euphoria and of the melody of bliss that slipped from between his lips with every lick.

“Hh- Hahh...” George gripped tightly to one of the blankets underneath him, fisting his paws into the thick fabric and not sparing a single care for how the woven wool caught against his claws as

he canted his hips up to push his cock further into the slick twist of Dream's tongue.

Dream only huffed with soft amusement, shifting his front paws forwards until he had them resting on George's outstretched legs, easily pinning him down with huge, sharp claws encircling his chubby thighs, blush-red pressure on peachy flesh. "Stay still, my love," He murmured into the fevered air surrounding them, pressing small kisses to the dips of George's hips and the stretch marks on his inner thighs before once more licking a stripe up George's cock. He tilted his head to the side as he curled his tongue around the shaft, teasing his mate with the barest of licks to his head, swollen to a pretty raspberry shade and leaking with a pearly drop of precum. Dream hummed as he pressed his tongue to it, dragging the wetness down to mix with his saliva that coated George's cock in slick heat.

George moaned, high and breathy, his skin on fire where Dream's claws touched him and his discomfort long forgotten. "I- I'm close," He managed to gasp, his paws flying down to grip onto Dream's smooth horns as the beast's tongue squeezed around his cock once again. "Dream please, I-" His words were cut off with the tight pressure of another contraction, his body writhing and shivering with the conflicting flares of pain and pleasure, thorns of spun sugar and venom binding him to one spot, frozen in place as Dream took him apart with claws and tongue, hot breath and teeth in an ever-present threat. Body taut, strung on a precipice he could only fall from, George ached with more than simple need, drowning in Dream's for once selfless desires and letting himself be dragged ever-deeper.

"Come on then, darling, come for me." Dream's words were mumbled against the skin of George's thigh as the beast pulled his tongue away for only a second, unwilling to cease until his mate was satisfied. The careful lowering of his jaws over George's cock and the accompaniment of the overwhelming heat of his mouth playing alongside the drag of his tongue against the most sensitive parts of George's body reminisced of a symphony, a music of a different form played by an artist and his only muse.

The string snapped, and George came with a cry.

Tentacles circling his torso and claws pinning his legs were the only sensations grounding him as his eyes snapped shut and his muscles all at once tensed up with the force of it, his thrown-back head cushioned by the blankets beneath him and his hair haloing out across wool and straw. His orgasm rushed through his body and he spilled, shooting strings of white into Dream's awaiting mouth, pearlescent liquid shining against the vivid green of his tongue.

The beast kept drawing him through it, tongue pulsing gently around George's spent cock and lapping up his cum until the man squirmed with the overstimulation and went to push Dream's head away.

Dream pulled away slowly, savouring the last traces of George's cum left on his tongue as he withdrew it back into his mouth. Claws loosened from their firm grip, paws stroking tenderly over the faint red marks left on George's thighs as Dream lifted his head and met eyes with his mate, his gaze fond even as veiled lust danced behind his eyes. "Was that good, darling?" He asked, light concern over the hint of soft amusement. "Do you feel any better?"

George smiled, his panting breaths growing slower and steadier as he came down from his high, and he placed one paw over his belly to stroke the bump. "That felt amazing. I... I completely forgot about the pain for a little while." He reached for the beast, humming contentedly when Dream let him pull his head up close to George's own, and placed a fond kiss to Dream's nose. "Thank you, Dream."

His thanks were followed by a groan as another contraction rippled through him, his abdomen

tightening and making him shudder with the painful ache. Dream held and hushed him as his toes curled and he grit his teeth.

“Are you okay, my love?” Dream’s question reached his ears as the worst of the pain passed. “I am glad I could distract you for a while, but are you in need of anything else now?”

George shivered, clutching his swollen belly as if he could will the pain away with his hands alone. “I-It’s getting worse, I think. I... Wonder if...”

Dream nods. “I expect it will be soon. I should fetch you some food and water, you need to keep your energy up.”

He stood up slowly and George struggled to sit up too, chasing after him before he was stopped by Dream’s paw halting him and carefully pushing him back down.

“No, darling, you stay here. It’s best if you don’t strain yourself too much right now, and I wouldn’t want you possibly getting hurt if you came outside with me.” The conflicted expression on George’s face was obvious, and Dream softened his tone as he drew his paw back. “You can walk slowly around down here if you feel like you want to get up, okay Georgie? I just don’t think it would be for the best if you got jolted on the leap up.” He dipped his head to nuzzle his cheek fondly against George’s. “I promise I will not take long. I want you, and the pups, to be safe.”

Understanding settled over George’s worried mind, and he nodded as he sat back in the nest of blankets and straw, nodding slightly to Dream’s reassurances. “Don’t be gone too long, please.” He played at his bottom lip with his teeth. “I don’t know when it will get even worse, and I... I need you here.”

“Of course.” Dream murmured against his skin. He left one last lingering kiss to George’s cheek before backing away, turning towards the pile at the other side of the room and retrieving a waterskin and bowl, clutching them both in one huge paw as he looked up towards the hole in the ceiling, the passage to the outside world.

George watched as the beast crouched and leapt, and just like that he was gone, leaving his mate with an aching belly and the silence of the ruin around him. George sighed softly, rubbing over his swollen stomach and clenching his fists when another agonising contraction seized him in its grasp and tore his insides apart. It left him shuddering and breathing heavily, and he pleaded to the nothingness surrounding him that Dream would return soon.

It was easier to deal with when he had a distraction, so George busied himself with fluffing up the straw in the bed underneath him, rearranging the blankets in an instinctual trance until he was satisfied with the way his nest felt around him. He sat there for a moment, curling in on himself through another contraction, before he slowly pushed himself up from the nest and struggled against the weight of his swollen belly to get to his feet. Starting to pace from one side of the room to the other, George found himself softly humming a tune. He could no longer remember where he’d first heard it; perhaps in a village he’d passed through while travelling, or during one of the market fairs that occasionally lit up the streets of his hometown with music and bright colour. Perhaps even in one of the playtime songs he’d sing with his childhood friends, their voices falling together in a clumsy harmony that drifted on the breeze through the small flower meadows they’d sit in for hours.

Wherever it came from, it had followed him, lingering in his memories until now, when it spilled in easy tones into the quiet darkness of the ruin around him. George hardly needed to recall it, simply letting it flow out of himself and enjoying the faint familiarity of the melody, closing his eyes as he stroked a paw over his bump. He wondered if his pups could hear it, too.

He hoped they could.

George stayed like that for a while, caressing his pup-filled belly and gently swaying to his own hummed tune, only skipping notes when he felt the stabs of pain from the squeezing pressure in his guts. They seemed to be getting more frequent, making George pray silently that Dream would return soon.

Thankfully, it wasn't much longer before George heard footsteps padding across the stone above him, and he cut his humming off as he went to sit back down in the nest, looking up towards the hole in the ceiling and watching out for the welcome sight of Dream dropping down into the room to join him. Sure enough, the beast leapt down from the floor above just a few seconds later, the waterskin clutched in his paw now full, and the bowl piled high with berries that Dream was careful to cover with his other hand to prevent them from falling out with the jolt of the fall. The sight of the food and water was a relief to George, who suddenly realised how hungry and thirsty he was, his energy lagging and his throat dry from crying and gasping his way through contractions every few minutes.

Dream seemed to sense his discomfort, quickly making his way over to George and setting the bowl down next to him in the nest. "Are you alright, my love?" He asked gently, a worried crease to his forehead as he lifted the waterskin to place it in George's waiting hands. "I hope your pain did not worsen while I was gone."

"A little," George admitted, uncorking the waterskin and sipping from it gratefully. "But I'm okay, Dream, I promise. At least now you're here with me again."

Dream smiled, so soft and fond it may have melted any winter's frost. "I'm here," He confirmed, stepping into the nest and leaning forwards to nuzzle George and leave a small lick on his cheek. "And I will not leave again now, not when you're so close to birthing. I will be here when our pups are born; I would not miss it for the world." He released more of his soothing scent as he spoke, the gentle haze of blossom and berries surrounding George and calming him easily, even as another contraction made the man reach for Dream's paw to grip onto. The pain was lessened greatly by Dream's presence and scent, but was still uncomfortable enough that George lay down on the blankets and straw of the nest and pulled Dream closer to lay with him as he groaned through each squeezing knot that pulled taut inside him.

"Thank you," George whispered, and he meant it with all his heart.

He ate the food Dream had brought him, then they stayed there for a length of time George couldn't possibly perceive in the midst of shocks of pain shooting through him like a flurry of burning arrows. Hours were lost to the steady, soothing motions of Dream stroking his paw over George's belly and hushing him with reassuring words and praises through increasingly more frequent and intense contractions, the pain lasting longer each time it gripped him, until George could only whimper and writhe, gasps falling from his lips and shimmering tears falling from his eyes as he was barely able to rest after one pulse before the next one squeezed its way through him, tearing him apart from the inside.

"*Dream*," He was finally able to choke out between clenches of his fists and teeth, too caught in the grip of heaving pain. "I- I think it- The pups, I th-think they're coming. It... It hurts so much!"

"Okay." Dream's tone was as calm as he could make it, but even through his own struggling, George could make out the threads of excitement and anticipation running through Dream's voice. And how could he not feel the same? Even with the increasingly agonising pain that coursed through his body, George was still, above all else, *excited* to give birth, to see the pups that he and Dream had so lovingly created. He let Dream move him carefully from his back onto his hands and

knees, the beast mumbling soft reassurances as he tucked extra straw under George's limbs to support him. "I've got you, my darling. Just focus on the sound of my voice, alright? I will give you as much of my scent as I can to reduce your pain, but it will still hurt. You will be okay, and so will our pups. You are strong enough. Here," Dream intertwined their tails together, squeezing George's affectionately and moving it to the side, away from his hips and hole, both of which were aching almost unbearably by this point as his whole body prepared to give birth. "Let your body do what it needs, relax as much as you can."

"I- I'm trying, I promise, Dream, I'm-" George let out an ugly sob, gripping the straw underneath him. "I'm trying-"

"I know, Georgie. Shh, you're doing so well."

Any sense of time was lost entirely as George knelt there in the nest he'd made, powerful contractions crippling him and Dream's scent making his head hazy. His only bind to reality, the grounding to the world around him, was the steady movement of Dream's huge clawed hands stroking over his back and across his belly, their gentle massaging of his hips and ass. Everything hurt. Everything. It was a kind of pain George had never felt in his life; so much more intense, like glass shards dragging down his spine and wildfires lighting up his hips and thighs, earthquakes wracking his body and crushing his bones under landslides. His chest ached, his nipples miserably sensitive and his lungs begging for the breaths he was struggling to take. Every moment stretched out into a lifetime, and George could only hope that the gods had not forsaken him entirely; that they'd take pity on his restless soul and spare him from any more pain.

He was not so lucky. Perhaps he should have known that not even the gods could see him now, not for how far into oblivion he had fallen.

Another lightning bolt of agony tore a scream from his throat; a desperate, pitiful cry that betrayed every ounce of his anguish and exhaustion. George felt so *fragile*, so frail, like his body might split in two with the weight of both his pregnant belly and all the burdensome, draining emotion that plagued him. His body and mind felt so far disconnected he could barely tell up from down, his centre of gravity thrown beyond his reach as the world seemed to spin around him. He was drifting, he was drowning, he was crushed beneath boulders and swallowed by the earth, torn into stardust in otherworldly explosions and cast into the abyss, everywhere and nowhere all at once.

"That's it, darling, you're doing so well for me. You're okay, shh. Good boy."

Dream's reassurances were in hushed tones as he shifted behind him, and George became suddenly aware of the cautious presence of Dream's nose close to his hole, the beast peering at him and sniffing curiously before drawing back slightly. Even in his wretched state, George felt a brief blur of confusion at the retreat before he all at once froze in place, shock and an odd sense of relief overtaking his body as warm liquid gushed from his twitching hole. He moaned softly as Dream's huge paw landed on his back, stroking tenderly before travelling down to his ass and carefully pulling his cheeks a little further apart, claws tapping lightly against his thighs to make him spread them more.

"There! The first pup should be coming out soon, Georgie! Push now, push for me, darling." The excitement in Dream's voice didn't quite manage to completely mask the air of slight nervousness he carried, but George was grateful for the beast remaining mostly calm while George was being torn to shreds in front of him.

He followed Dream's instructions as best he could, matching the rhythm of the unceasing contractions with his own desperate pushing, sobbing and screaming his throat hoarse with each *agonising* second that passed as he battled with the very foreign feeling of pushing something of a

not insignificant size out of him. He knew logically that the pup must be tiny, but it felt *huge* as George clenched his fists into a white-knuckle grip on the blankets beneath him, straining with aching muscles and feeling a meagre shock of relief at every inch it seemed to move. Behind him, Dream was enthusiastically muttering praises and words of encouragement that George could scarcely hear over the roaring in his own ears.

“That’s it! Almost there, come on my love, you’re doing amazing. A few more pushes for me, darling.”

George wailed with hysterical desperation as something finally started to push out of him. *The head of the pup*, his hormone-riddled, delirious brain supplied, accompanied by an excited roar from Dream. George’s limbs were trembling violently with the effort of holding himself up, and he collapsed forward, burying his face between his hands and the straw of the nest as his arms gave way. And finally, *finally*, the pup slipped out.

George cried with temporary relief at the brief respite from the excruciating pain, feeling both completely disconnected from his body altogether, and achingly hyper-aware of every miniscule sensation around and within him. The need to see, to *feel* his pup suddenly crashed over him in a flurry, and he scrambled to push himself up on his hands, whipping his head around with the energy he was struggling to gather. Dream hushed him gently, already there with the pup nestled in the straw between them, licking it clean of the reddish slimy film that seemed to cover it.

“Look,” He mumbled in soft wonder, lifting the pup carefully between his teeth and moving to place it down next to George’s side. “It’s our pup, darling. We made this.”

George gazed down at the little thing they’d created, a small bundle of silky brown fur with teal-coloured bumps on its head that squeaked with tiny cries as it tried to snuggle closer to him. All at once, the rest of the world seemed to melt away, not even his unending contractions able to tear apart the overwhelming need to nurture, to feed and protect and hold *his pup* close to his heart, and as his body trembled with tears of an emotion other than pain, he let Dream gently move him to lay on his side, his arms tucked under his head and the pup nestled up against his chest. It lifted its head, weakly opening its mouth as it searched blindly for food, and with a slight nudge from Dream’s nose it latched on to one of George’s already-leaking nipples, suckling hungrily.

“We made it...” George repeated in a murmur, curling his tail around himself and the pup protectively, encircling it in against his body. He tilted his head to look up at Dream with an exhausted kind of pride and delirious joy, and the beast smiled back down at him, dipping his head to fondly nuzzle George’s tear-streaked face and kiss the salt from his skin.

The uncomfortable reminder of George’s still ongoing labour came in the form of another contraction that made him squirm and cry out, parting his legs in a feeble attempt to relieve the pain a little.

Dream hummed, soft and patient, and shuffled back behind George to nose cautiously at his hole, placing a paw on George’s thigh to spread his legs wider as he did so. “You’re doing so well, my love, but there’s still more pups to come,” He reminded his mate gently.

George groaned, fatigue already overtaking him. “How... How many more?”

“Hm.” Dream moved his paw up to George’s belly, pressing lightly on the skin as he felt around the bump. “It is difficult to tell. I can feel three here.” He shook his head. “We may only know for sure when they are born.”

George let out a pitiful noise.

“Darling.” Dream stroked through his mate’s hair, rumbling affectionately when George leaned into the touch. “These are our pups. I know you can do this. You may rest afterwards when they are all born safely. I know you’re tired, but are you alright?”

“Mm,” George mumbled into his arms, before turning his head back up to face his mate. “I’m okay, thank you Dreamie. I... I want to meet the rest of our pups.” He gazed down at the tiny pup still feeding from him, making soft squeaking noises as it suckled.

Dream nodded, stroking across George’s back and belly and down his thighs with warm, careful hands. “Relax as much as you can, the pain will last for as long as the birth.” He pressed a tender kiss to George’s back, before gently parting the man’s thighs once again. “Push when I say.”

Soon all the agony came flooding back, and George drowned in it once more.

The hours passed in a haze after that, time fading into nothingness with every wave of aching pain that crashed over his body, George gasping at the surface for air, for relief, overwhelmed and exhausted and sobbing desperately with tears he didn’t know he had left. Each harrowing second was an age filled with aches, with straining and panting and begging for an end to his suffering, a millennia interrupted only by Dream’s soft, reassuring, grounding words and the cries of each newborn pup that slipped out of his belly and snuggled into his side.

Eventually, that too faded.

George was left only with the last lingering aches through his lower back and thighs and deep within his no-longer swollen belly, and the sweet strawberry perfume that pushed those pains to the back of his weary mind.

The last pup to be born was now cuddled up with the others, curled against his warm body and suckling gently from his nipple with a gummy little mouth. George was filled with indescribable joy at the sight, warmth and protectiveness and wondrous pride washing gently over him as he took in the five tiny bundles of soft brown fur that he and Dream had created between them. The pups’ eyes weren’t open yet, and the nubs they had for horns were velvety and soft to the touch, even as they emitted faint glows in different hues; one had green a shade deeper than Dream’s, one had blue even brighter than George’s. One had yellow, different from either of them, and the firstborn had teal, a mix of them both. Finally, the youngest glowed with a pretty bluish-purple, a shade reminiscent of the iris flowers George had always admired.

The pups were here. They were born, and they were *safe*.

George sighed, any energy he may have had left draining from his fatigued body as he reached for Dream, needy for warmth and comfort and the soft embrace of sleep. His mate was quick to go to his aid, taking one last glance at their pups before laying down next to George and curling his body around them all, sealing their little family into a warm, protective bubble and pressing himself close to George.

“I’m so proud of you, darling,” Dream mumbled into George’s neck, nuzzling and licking affectionately at the skin there, pressing his nose to George’s jaw. “I always knew you’d be perfect for this. Look,” He gestured down at the pups cuddled between them. “Look what we made. We did this, together.” His voice sang with happiness, with pride and wonder and fierce loyalty. “I love you.”

George smiled sleepily, snuggling against Dream and relaxing into his hold, aching and exhausted and only kept awake by the sheer happiness flowing like sunshine through his veins. “I love you too, Dreamie.”

Dream's hold on him tightened and George pressed further into his hold, letting loose a soft purring noise he didn't even know he could make. Dream repeated the purr in response, the vibrations travelling through George's chest and settling in contentment within him.

"Can I sleep now?" He asked in a sleepy mumble.

"Of course you can, my darling," Dream replied, all quiet whispers and love in serenity, and George relaxed against him and closed his eyes, basking in the feeling of *home*. Dream's gentle hum was the last thing he heard before the tranquility of welcoming sleep finally overtook him, dragging him beneath the abyss.

"Sleep well, Georgie."

on their own

Chapter Notes

finally, here is chapter 13! sorry it took so long, in the time since i posted the last chapter i quit my job and started a new one, and now i have much less free time. i've still been determined to work on this as much as i can though!

thank you so much for being patient guys, hope you enjoy this chapter <3

Pinpricks of soft light filled George's vision as he blinked slowly awake, yawning sleepily and rubbing remnants of crust from the corners of his eyes with the back of a paw. He still felt weary, his body riddled with the afterpains of exertion, his back, thighs and ass screamingly numb as though they'd been crushed under rocks or battered by the unrelenting tide. There was another feeling haunting George too, one of odd emptiness, and he ghosted a paw over his stomach to feel not the familiar bump and the satisfaction of being *full*, but instead an expanse of smooth, soft skin and gentle chub, devoid of its precious cargo.

It had all been worth it, however.

George looked down towards the source of the quiet lights; the small forms of his beloved pups tucked safely against his side and snuggled up to him, curled up in a bubble of sweet warmth between him and Dream. Their little bodies rose and fell with their soft breathing, their tiny nub horns glowing gently in the dark of the room, not yet as bright as their father's. It filled George's heart with something lovely and light, to see them all cuddled together like this, cosy and safe and so wonderfully *theirs*. This was their family, this beautiful scene he and Dream had created together. *Theirs*.

Dream himself was curled around his mate and their pups, wrapping them warmly in a tangle of fur and strong limbs. He'd been rumbling with quiet snores, but by now he'd awoken to snap George out of his reverie with fond mumbles.

"They are perfect. I'm so proud of you, Georgie. So proud of our pups."

"Dream..." George tilted his head up, pressing a sweet kiss to Dream's snout and nuzzling him affectionately, curling their tails together as he did so and shifting as close as he could with their pups still huddled between them. "I love you," His fondness, soft sentiment he could no longer keep to himself, spilled out in hushed promises into the quiet darkness of the morning and into the warmth between them. "I love you and I love our pups- So, so much."

Dream's face split into the softest smile. "And I may say the same."

He dipped his head down to nuzzle oh-so gently at one of the sleepy pups, causing it to yawn and let out a tiny squeak before it settled down and fell asleep once more, nestled between its siblings. George watched it with rapt attention, adoration blooming in his heart in lovely bouquets.

"As much as I would prefer to stay here for eternity," Dream continued, hesitancy obvious in his whispers. "I will need to leave soon- Only for a short time! But I will need to fetch more food for you, my darling. You need to keep your strength up so our pups can feed also."

George's face dropped. "You have to leave again?" He curled into himself a little tighter, wrapping his arms around his chest. "Please don't- I- What if something happens?" He gestured down almost desperately at the pups. "How will I... Be able to protect them?"

Dream looked away, humming thoughtfully for a moment before turning his head back to face his mate once more. "I could give you a way to protect yourself and the pups... You most likely won't need it for just a short time alone, but I do want you to feel safe." He leaned forward slightly to lick gently at George's cheek. "I care about you all. I want to promise you safety, even when I may not be around."

"Please," George reached forwards to tangle his fingers into Dream's thick fur. "I want, I- I need to protect them. I need to be able to defend them when you're not here. If something happened, I-" He swallowed heavily, looking down at the pups with love and worry burning in his eyes. "I wouldn't- I just- Please. Whatever you can give me, I'll take it."

"You are sure?"

"Yes! Please, Dream, I want this. You defend me so fiercely, and I want to be able to do the same for our pups."

"I love you." Dream tucked his face close to George's, breathing warm and heavy against his skin and nuzzling against his cheek. "I could never have hoped for a better mate than you, my love. You are so perfect for both I and our pups."

He lifted his head once more to look George in the eyes, speaking with comforting assurance. "I will give you what you need."

George gratefully anticipated the slow snaking of the feeder tentacle out from Dream's back, opening his mouth for it and sinking into the soothing weight of it settling on his tongue, sliding down his throat like it had so many times before. He'd somewhat missed the comforting sensation of these feeding sessions, so different than anything else he experienced, and it seemed almost enough to lull him back into a slumber, were it not for the prickling aches that spread like a flame through paper across his back and left him wondering what Dream could be gifting him with this time. The pain, as always, was dampened by Dream letting him inhale against his outstretched neck to fill his lungs with strawberry-blossom numbness, and George settled gently into the wool and hay of the nest and the shag of Dream's fur as his spine seemed to pulse with tingling energy.

"Darling?" Dream's voice brought him back to reality, and George realised with fuzzy surprise that he'd somehow slipped into sleep after all. The tentacle had retreated from his mouth by now, and he was left blinking slowly into a bright green gaze.

"Hm?"

A huge paw came to cup his head, gently, oh-so gently. "It's over, Georgie. Can you feel the change yet?"

A thumb brushed affectionately across his cheek, and George tilted his head, leaning into the contact and placing his own smaller paw into Dream's free one. "I can feel it in my back, under my skin... I can't tell what it is though." He squeezed Dream's hand gently. "How do I use it?"

"You learned how to move your tail," Dream offered, no less vague about the nature of the new transformation. "It would be a little like that, I think. Push them from your back, you will understand their movement soon enough."

Confusion clouded George's features, but he followed Dream's directions as if attempting to extend an extra limb from his back. It took effort at first, and frustration crept into his mind at his own body's apparent refusal to give, but then with another slight push it finally succeeded, and George let out a soft gasp at the feeling of something sliding out from his back as easily as water from a bottle, the cork loose in his grasp.

"There!" Dream's excitement was palpable, and George was suddenly thrown back to the sensation of Dream caressing his tail for the first time, the memory returning strong as the beast took a careful hold of one of the appendages now emerging from George's back, huge claws closing around the gently swaying form and tugging it in front of the man's eyes.

A tentacle.

George's eyes widened at the sight, and he tentatively reached out to touch it for himself, as if to confirm its realness. Sure enough, he could feel the brush of his own paw through it, and he gazed in wonder at the new extension of his being. Cool and smooth, it glowed much like Dream's, but in the same pretty shade of blue as George's own horns, and it responded to every little twitch and nudge he commanded of it to wave and writhe back and forth. The way it moved was fascinating, mesmerising in the same way that watching Dream's was, albeit a little slower and clumsier in the way his tail had been when it was new and unfamiliar to George. He twisted it, curled it, flexed it to feel its strength, then turned to Dream with glow as bright as sky reflected in his eyes.

"Like yours," George breathed, picking up control of the rest of his tentacles to curl them around his body and move towards Dream's, which had now emerged as if to greet the newcomers. "They move just like yours."

Dream smiled, nodding softly. "And almost as strong. They are infused with magic, just as your horns are, so they depend not on your physical strength but simply on your control over them. You will be able to pick and lift things easily, should you practice enough."

He paused to look down at the pups, then back up to George. "I am sure you will be able to defend the nest with this new strength, my love. Even if you are not so confident with using them at first they will at least buy you more time until I return."

"Thank you," George responded, soft, sincere. "I feel so much safer already. Though not as much as if you could stay here with me, of course." He extended one of his tentacles a little further, twining it around Dream's and squeezing gently as if the connection would stop Dream from leaving so easily. "But I understand why you have to go. Promise me you won't be gone for too long?"

Dream bowed his head, pushing it forward to rest his forehead against George's in a gesture that sang of his sincerity, his devotion, the silken thread between familiar souls. "I promise."

He laid there for a lingering moment before reluctantly standing, stepping away from the picture of perfect loveliness in the nest to turn his head upwards to the opening in the ceiling above.

"I will return soon, Georgie," He said, and then he was gone.

George watched him until he saw the last flick of the beast's tail vanishing out of sight. Sighing, he stretched out in the now slightly colder and emptier nest and cuddled up to the pups again. They'd stayed sleeping throughout, their little bodies rising and falling with their breaths and tiny muffled grunts and squeaks escaping them as they dreamt. George was surprised they hadn't woken to cry for milk yet, but he supposed it wouldn't be much longer before they did stir.

Sure enough, after drifting in and out of a sleepy daze fuelled by the warmth of their soft forms, George was startled awake again by a sharp, plaintive cry and looked down to see a few of the pups nosing blindly at his side, the others slowly waking and following their siblings' actions as the increasing noise dragged them from slumber.

George laughed softly at their enthusiasm, rolling gently onto his side to reveal his chest so the pups could feed, and helping them find their mark with a guiding paw on their backs when they stumbled. Soon they were all suckling happily, and George laid his head down on his arm, content to watch them feed. They were hungry little things, and it seemed sure that they'd grow quickly. Would they eventually be as big as their monstrous father? Or would their growth be stunted by George's own, much lesser size?

He hoped they'd be strong. Strong, healthy, *not human*. They'd taken none of George's human traits, being almost identical in appearance to Dream and only differing in the colour of their horns. *And tongues*, George noted, watching a pup stop feeding to yawn widely, its little mouth visible as a darker, duller shade of blue than its bright horn nubs. Its ear twitched as it latched back onto George to finish its meal, and it made a small grunting noise that caused the man to giggle. The pups were so cute, so perfect, and George felt a surge of joy and pride well up in him at the thought that they were *his*. His children, his lovely creation, a wonderful gift from the one who he loved the most. And who loved him! George could truly never have imagined a more perfect mate, none so doting or caring or protective or-

Or *his*.

Because Dream was his, and he was Dream's, and he would never, *could* never have found a partnership as pure and idyllic anywhere else, with anyone else. Certainly not with another human. No one but Dream could give him *this*. Why else would he have come here? Why else would Dream have chosen him, transformed him, completed him so beautifully? This was home, this was *life*, and George could want for nothing more.

The pups' suckling was beginning to slow down as they became sleepy once more, and George smiled and tucked them in close to him as one by one, they stopped feeding to lay down in the nest. A light purring sounded from the pile they formed curling around each other, almost indistinguishable where one tiny body ended and the next began, and George's heart swelled with fondness for his beautiful pups, his wonderful little family.

And all fell quiet for a while, the pups' sleepy purrs and snores and George's own soft breathing the only sounds to cut through the peaceful silence of the dark room around them.

George liked the quiet. Living amongst humans had never allowed him much; he had been used to waking in the morning to the sounds of the busy market setting up in the village streets, or to the hammering of a nearby blacksmith or the clattering of carts along cobbled roads. He'd fall asleep at night to the yowling of street cats or the drunken revelling from the alehouse around the corner, tossing and turning as the bright wash of the moon fell through his thin curtains. All too loud, too restless, too human. Never silent.

Here it was different. Here, hidden deep in the forest, entombed within thick stone walls, here it felt like an entirely different world. Here George could soak in the silence as much as he wished, bathing in it like calm waters, rippling it only by his own command and hearing it undisturbed by the splashes of others. No one but he or Dream were allowed here, no humans to trespass, to shatter the still silence of the place left so long abandoned by humanity that the only traces of it that remained were the lonely bones left lying in the cold, dark corners.

And yet...

Light, unsure, distinctly *human* footsteps sounded against the stone ledge above, an unwelcome disturbance, a trespass into *his* territory. George's ears pricked and he sat up quickly, softly, hyper-alert to the shuffling, the quiet stumbling, the footfall which broke through his precious silence like a rock through a lake surface, which last time he had heard it, had only brought him terror and pain. It couldn't be the same group of humans, Dream had made sure of that. Was it someone they had known? Were they here to hurt him again?

Their footsteps echoed slowly around the room above, bouncing off the rough stone walls and falling into George's ears. The human was exploring the ruin, cautious and foolish and easy to track with every scrape of their shoe and each nervous, shaky breath that slipped heavy from their lungs. Did they even realise how loud they were being?

A thought struck George, sudden and terrifying. Were they here to hurt the pups?

Dream's cautionary tales sprang to his mind, tales told with anger and bitterness staining the words an ugly shade of rust, corroded by toxicity and leaving the tang of iron and acid in the mouth. Beast-slayers, clad in robes of deep purple and with hands that itched with spellpower unseen by all but the strongest and most learned of mages. Would this lone human prove to be one of them?

George shrank back down into the nest, staying alert enough to hear what the human was doing, but focusing now on covering the pups as much as possible, hiding them with the cover of a blanket and the shield of his own body. With luck, the intruder would leave without trespassing further, and George could simply breathe a sigh of relief and wait until Dream returned.

No such luck arrived.

Instead, the gentle scuffing of leather shoes against stone grew slightly louder, slightly closer, as the human stepped further out onto the ledge above, standing over the pit and presumably looking down into it. George could make out their silhouette, blurry dark edges against the faint light filtering in from outside. He could only hope his own light, and the smaller lights of the pups, weren't enough to catch the eye of the enemy in the shadowy corner they were nestled in.

The silhouette crouched down, shuffling with something. A bag of some kind? A quiet clinking sound followed, then the unmistakable slither of rope, and George's heart stopped.

Sure enough, within moments the knotted, frayed end of a thick rope fell into George's view, the pale brown of the cursed snake seeming much less of a lifeline and more of a heavy, choking threat to George as it swayed slowly in the otherwise comforting darkness of his home.

The swaying rope suddenly stilled, and George drew himself in, laying lower and shifting to cover the pups more as he glanced cautiously upwards to see the cloaked figure pull the rope taut with their weight, wrapping their legs around it and lowering themselves down its length with hands that trembled with the force of their grip. They stumbled a little when they finally reached the bottom and were able to set their feet down, and when they pulled their hood down George was finally able to get a look at their face.

It was a young guy, his jaw set firm with faux confidence and the faint patterns of intricate spell runes burned lightly into the skin of his neck and face.

George kept his breath held tight, burning like acid in his lungs as the man's eyes passed over the nest and its precious contents, thankfully not catching on the tiny pinpricks of coloured glow peeking out from under the wool of a thick blanket. He turned to scout the other side of the room, and George could only hope he found nothing of interest here and left swiftly.

Truthfully, George was seething with silent frustration. How dare a human come here! How dare a human trespass into the sanctuary only he and Dream shared, to bring such deep fear and hatred with them as George had only known from the last time humans ventured here. Binds rough and unyielding around his arms, his mouth stuffed silent, a knife to his throat- Would he suffer the same fate this time? Would his *pups* suffer such a fate? Would he not be so quickly saved?

He stayed quiet.

The human sighed with clear disappointment and annoyance, empty-handed of whatever it was he came looking for. George held himself back from breathing his own sigh of relief, waiting until the intruder left before he even dared move a hair's breadth for fear of drawing the diverted attention back to himself. A hand fell back onto the rope, gripping worn knots and preparing to haul its owner back up to the surface.

And then the human slipped.

It wasn't much, but his misplaced foot shot out from underneath him and he tripped, stumbling as he struggled to stop himself from falling. And the loud curse he let slip as he did so happened to be just loud enough.

One of the pups tucked against George's side awoke suddenly with a startled cry that rang out like an alarm bell in the still air of the room, making George glance down in horror at the same time as the human whipped around like a shot, his guard fully up and shock painted in messy streaks across his face.

George barely had a second to react as his cautious hopes crumbled before him, the human's hands lighting up with bright, sparking magic in a mere instant and held out before him. A warning to stay back? A threat to harm him?

It didn't matter the reason, not when his pups were here. Not when they were so vulnerable, laid out in the firing line and lit by the harsh, blinding light of the human's magic.

George felt his whole body heat with fear and rage, his limbs trembling as his fists clenched and every instinct within him fired alight with the fierce, unquenchable need to protect. Pushing his knees underneath him, George rose to his feet, locking eyes with the intruder in a challenge. *How dare you?* His gaze spoke. *How dare you come into my home and threaten my children?* There was a deep, dangerous growl coming from somewhere, and it was only after a long, tension-heavy moment that George realised it was emanating from deep within his own chest.

George was barely thinking, too high on instinct and fury to hear anything past the rushing in his own ears and see anything other than the enemy in front of him. Nothing mattered. Nothing mattered but the threat before him and his pups behind him. He was long past acting on rationale and long past any possibility of connection with the human, empathy for a species he once belonged to nothing more than dust in the wake of the animalistic ferocity that washed his mind in bright, bloody red.

The human's fingers twitched, the magic curling around them, and George was gone. Any control over himself was forfeited to the rage blazing inside him, and without even noticing the tentacles snaking out of his back at a speed almost impossible to see, George already had the human wrapped tightly within their hold, watching pure panic flare in his eyes and the desperate sparks of a magic unable to be released from his hands. Nothing but instinct, nothing but the thought of his pups cowering behind him, and George was squeezing the enemy in a crushing grip, another split second and he was *hurling* him against the far wall.

Less than a second, and it was over with a sickening crunch.

One beat, two beats. George's chest rose and fell heavily. The remnants of the anger and fear that had consumed him so intensely now fizzled in his veins, dissipating into nothing but lingering anxiety, a comedown that left him shivering where he stood, naked in more ways than one as he stood on the cold, dark stone.

He blinked slowly, his vision losing its watery haze and his eyes focusing back onto the scene laid out before him. A body, a human body, lay limp and lifeless against the wall on the far side of the room. Crumpled, contorted, *human*.

George took a step towards it, towards the body, towards the human.

The human didn't move.

Something briefly crossed George's mind, something that was human once, perhaps. Something that told him that he should be moving away, that he should find the sight horrifying, that he should regret losing control so easily, so suddenly.

He didn't.

George didn't regret protecting his pups, his *children*. Not from a naive, stupid human who'd stumbled into the wrong place and had the gall to lean into magic so quickly, to light up his fists in front of George and his precious progeny in some weak attempt to threaten. George's heart only stirred with the slightest shred of sympathy for the human when he remembered the look of panic that had taken over him before his magic, and his life, had been snuffed out.

George made no attempt to look away, either. Nor did he find the sight particularly horrifying. In fact, as he now made another oddly confident step towards the crumpled corpse, another feeling entirely began to stir inside him.

Hunger.

It crept through him steadily, a gnawing in the pit of his stomach and saliva gathering on his tongue, a craving for raw, tender flesh. A desire to descend upon the corpse of his prey and take what he deserved, to feast his fill.

He blinked again, and everything came rushing back.

He was looking at a body. A human body, a human that he'd killed. George was looking at a human body and feeling *hungry*.

He took a step back, almost stumbling in his sudden need to put distance between him and the object of his animalistic hunger. When... When had he started seeing humans as prey? George's heart thudded against his ribcage, his chest tight with the weight of his new, almost sickening revelation, and he took another shaky step away from the body, the urge to flee entirely held back by the part of him that ached to feed.

Standing here was suddenly too much, all too much, and with one last glance at the horror in the corner, George turned and retreated back to the nest on trembling legs. His pups had quietened under the heavy, suffocating fear in the air, but were still meeping and whining softly in distress, calling helplessly for the comfort of their mother. George was only too relieved that none of them had been hurt, settling back into the nest and curling up alongside them with warm hushes and the brush of a paw over their backs, a wobbly smile gracing his lips as their body heat seeped into his skin.

He couldn't fall asleep again yet, not when he still felt pulled taut like a string, not when fear and agitation still bubbled in his veins and churned his stomach, not when the body of a man who'd made the wrong decision lay crumpled in the corner like nothing more than a scrap. George's pups lay dozing beside him, while George could do little more than wait.

Dream was always his comfort, and that day was no exception as George heard the familiar tapping of claws on stone hit his pricked-up ears. The beast dropped down through the ceiling a second later, his arms laden with stolen food, and George could have sobbed with relief at the sight. In an instant he sat up, his shoulders sagged and he reached towards the beast with hands greedy for warmth, calling to him and urging him closer.

Dream's ears perked up at George's cry and he ambled towards him with a fond smile, only to stop suddenly in his tracks only a few steps from the nest. He raised his nose to the air, sniffing cautiously until his brow furrowed in concern and confusion. He ducked his head, slowly lowering his arms to place the items he'd gathered onto the stone floor, then turning to focus his attention on the unfamiliar scent.

George watched as Dream dropped back down to all fours, his wild nature obvious in the way he stalked towards the corner, to the source of his suspicion. His tail swung from side to side behind him, his ears pinned back to his head as he made careful study of the body, nose flaring with curious sniffs. George stayed quiet, following Dream's movements and twisting the corner of a blanket between his hands.

Dream turned his head to face him, expression steady and questioning, and any words of explanation George was preparing to spit out died suddenly in his throat.

The beast glanced down at the dead human once more.

"They tried to attack the pups."

It wasn't even a question, really. George nodded, still unable to speak.

Dream stayed standing there, his gaze fixed on his mate.

"What... are you doing?" George's mouth felt like sand, dry and thick.

Dream had a curious, unreadable look in his eyes. "This is your first kill."

George squirmed uncomfortably under the scrutiny and the lead lining of Dream's words. "I- I, um, suppose it is."

Dream tilted his head, and if George wasn't so confused, if he didn't feel like his skin was crawling and tingling along his arms and down his back, maybe he'd consider the action cute. As it was, though, Dream seemed to be waiting for something, expectant, and his unfaltering stare felt almost eerie as they both stood there, unmoving, just them, their pups in the nest, and the body in the corner.

Dream was the one to break the hanging silence. "Are you going to feed?"

"What?" George responded quickly, with familiar confusion more comforting to drift in his head and leave his lips than the alternative, something George felt more accurate but so much more sickening to consider the implications of.

The beast held his gaze. "You killed it."

“I- I don’t-”

“You haven’t done this before,” Dream’s eyes softened a little in what seemed like understanding. “Humans don’t do the same thing.” It was if he was stating facts more to himself than to provide George with any kind of explanation.

“No..?”

Dream didn’t look away as he nudged the corpse with one foot.

“The one who makes the kill is always the first to feed.”

George’s stomach turned, though not with pure disgust, the way he’d prefer. It hummed with lingering hunger instead, an urge primal and powerful and more his own than he’d find comfort in admitting. His eyes drifted down to the dead prey lying by Dream’s feet, and he quickly flicked his gaze upwards, unwilling to look for too long lest he give in to the urge bubbling within him.

“N-No, I don’t want- Um...”

“You don’t want to feed?” Dream’s tone flickered somewhere between confusion and understanding.

George glanced one last time at the body. “No.”

“Okay.” Dream accepted his refusal easily, more casual over George’s discomfort than George had perhaps expected him to be. “Would you like me to take it outside to feed?”

“Yes. Please do. You... You can feed on it,” It wasn’t a human anymore, at least not one that George cared enough about to refer to as anything other than an object. It was Dream’s meal now. Nothing more. “I’ll eat the food you brought me. Just please.... Take that thing outside. It almost hurt the pups, I don’t want to see it.”

Dream nodded, taking the limp body up between his jaws and carrying it out of the corner, leaping up onto the ledge above and ambling out of the temple with the dead man’s limbs swinging loosely beneath him. George watched him go, the crunch of bones between Dream’s teeth growing fainter with distance.

George sighed shakily in something like relief, lowering himself back down until he was tucked in close to the pups once more. Reaching for the items Dream had brought home with hesitant paws gave him a welcome distraction from unwelcome thoughts, and he munched slowly on a loaf of stolen bread with only curious musings about where exactly it may have been stolen from.

Dream emerged a little while later, dropping down into the room with traces of blood on the corners of his teeth the only indication of anything having happened. He licked it away as he stepped into the nest and settled down next to George in the nest, the pups in between them purring happily with the added warmth and sagging into sleep minutes later.

“Georgie.”

“Hm?” He looked up towards Dream, the warmth and silence settling comfortably around them.

Dream’s voice was gentle, concerned, a far cry from the eerie tones of earlier, and one that George much preferred. “Are you okay, darling?”

“Mhm,” His eyes fell down to the pups. “I mean, yes, I’m okay. I am now, at least.”

“You did really well.” He leaned his head down towards George, nuzzling gently at his neck and face and licking his cheek affectionately. “You’re safe. Our pups are safe. I’m so proud of you, my love.”

George let a soft smile grace his cheeks, and he reached to thread his fingers through Dream’s fur and pull him closer, burying his face in the beast’s neck. “Thank you,” He mumbled into the thick fluff. “I couldn’t imagine what would have happened if I didn’t- I-If I couldn’t-”

“You don’t have to imagine that. You’re safe, see? You protected yourself, and you protected the pups.”

“I did. They’re... They’re safe.” George blinked away the tears that wobbled at the corners of his eyes, sighing against Dream’s neck before pulling his head back to look down at the sleepy pups instead. “They’re safe.”

The warm silence cradled them once again as they lay there, breathing and heartbeats steady in the gentle darkness.

“We should name them,” George found himself murmuring against Dream’s chest. “The pups, they need names.”

“They do,” Dream’s agreement came soft and fond. “We can name them together.”

He reached out one huge paw, cupping it gently around one of the sleeping pups and stroking her back. “Do you have a name to give her?”

George gazed at the pup’s tiny form purring quietly against Dream’s hand, her teal horns glowing softly, and a name fell easily from his lips. “Hope.”

“Hope? That’s a pretty name.”

“Mm,” George reached out to pet her gently on the head, careful not to wake her with the movement. “She is hope. All the pups are. For us and our family, they’re- They’re hope.”

“Hope,” Dream repeated softly, a pleased lilt to his voice.

He moved his paw to pet another pup, this one with horns glowing a darker green than his own, a shade reminiscent of the forest above them. “This one, her name shall be Echo. And this one,” His paw hovered over the pup with bright, sunshine-yellow horns. “His name shall be Spirit.”

“Hope, Echo and Spirit,” George smiled at how the names felt in his head, on his tongue, how well they fit the little pups sleeping between them. “There are still two more to name.”

Dream nodded. “Do you want to name them?”

George looked down at the two remaining unnamed pups, one with horns that glowed a bright, light blue against his fur, and the other with horns of a deep, pretty purple.

“Dawn and Dusk.”

“Hope, Echo, Spirit, Dawn and Dusk,” Dream hummed contentedly. “Those are good names. Perfect names for perfect pups.”

“They are.” George smiled down at the sleepy bundle of pups snuggled between him and Dream, their gentle purring slowly lulling him into sleep alongside them. He curled his tail closer around

them, intertwining it with Dream's. "I love them. I love our pups."

Dream turned his own fond smile towards George. "And I love you, my darling."

George's smile turned vibrant, his cheeks dusted with pink as Dream moved one huge hand to cup his face. "I love you too."

They drifted off like that, wrapped around each other and with their little family between them, and with Dream's comforting murmur soothing George into sleep.

"Sleep well, Georgie."

lost inside a head of dreams

Chapter Notes

here's chapter 14 everyone! thanks so much for being patient as usual, and i hope you've all had a good holiday season and new year! i've been a little busy as i was offered a different, better job and recently started it, but i'm working from home now so i'll hopefully have some more time to write in the evenings :]

this story is almost coming to a close, as i'm sure you'll notice if you check the chapter count! i'll have a lot more to say in the notes of the next chapter, but for now i hope you enjoy this one <3

The rhythmic movement of a tiny, warm tongue against his cheek was enough to stir George from sleep, blinking in bleary confusion before reaching up to cease the wake-up call, gently batting away the little nose pressed against his face.

“Mama! Mama’s awake!”

George couldn’t help but smile. It wasn’t the first time he’d been awoken by one of his pups licking his face, nor would it be the last, but despite the cool light of morning being unwelcome to his still-sleepy eyes, he would always have a weakness for the pups’ cheery greetings, gold-tinged sunrises threading their excitement. He rubbed lazily at his face and cracked his eyes open, his vision being instantly filled with the brightly coloured glows of half a dozen different sets of horns.

“It’s morning, mama! Good morning!”

“Mm, good morning sweetheart,” George mumbled, reaching towards the source of the voice and petting Echo gently on the head. “Did you sleep well?”

She nodded excitedly. “I did! And look, look mama! My tail thingy got bigger, look!”

George pushed himself to sit up, nearly getting smacked in the face by the hyperactive pup’s swinging tail as he did so. After he’d grabbed the appendage to stop it wagging quite so fast, the source of the excitement became obvious, Echo’s tail spade having grown by a visible amount even overnight.

A proud grin split George’s face. “Wow, it has grown! You’ll be such a big girl soon, won’t you?”

“I will! I’ll be as big as daddy! Do you think I’ll be able to go out hunting with him soon? Please? Please mama, am I big enough to go hunting with daddy yet?”

George sighed softly, his gaze wandering over to where Dream was curled around them, rumbling quietly as he, too, stirred from sleep. The beast raised his head slowly and blinked at George, smiling fondly when he saw his mate surrounded by their pups. “Good morning, my love.”

George’s heart melted a little more every morning. “Dream,” He said lightly. “Echo wants to go out hunting with you.”

Dream chuckled. “Oh, really? Do any of you other little ones feel brave enough to want to go out

too?”

He was answered by a chorus of eager little voices, all but one of the pups turning their attention to Dream.

“Spirit? What’s wrong, sweetheart?” George pulled the quiet pup closer to him. “You don’t want to go out with the rest of the litter?”

He shook his head, his horns leaving yellow streaks in George’s vision where he moved. “It’s scary outside, mama. I want to stay in here with you where it’s warm.”

“You’ll need to learn to hunt eventually,” George assured gently. “But I understand if you’re scared. The world outside is very big, and it can be hard to get used to.” He stroked his paw down the pup’s back, smoothing over fur and scratching lightly along his spine, soothing him with quiet purrs. “You will be okay though, you’ve got your daddy and all your littermates to help protect you! Haven’t you?”

Spirit gave a small smile, but still kept his gaze off to the side, his ears twitching nervously. “I s’pose so…”

George gave a thoughtful hum. “What are you scared of, sweetie?”

Their conversation fell into a timid silence for a moment, Spirit curling his tail around himself and looking down into the straw of the nest, before a different little voice caught both their attention.

“Mama? Is Spirit okay?”

“Dusk!” George smiled at the purple-horned pup who’d turned her focus away from where Dream was poking playfully with one long claw at three squealing pups, and had wriggled closer to the two of them instead. “Spirit’s just a little nervous about going outside for the first time.”

Spirit mumbled in affirmation, burying his face against George’s soft stomach. “It’s scary. Too big.”

“You haven’t even seen it yet, silly!” Dusk laughed. “Daddy will be there so we’ll be safe.”

Another mumble came from Spirit, more unintelligible this time, and George pricked his ear to hear it better as Dusk shoved her face closer to her brother’s. “What did you say?”

“What if I get left behind!?”

“Why would you be left behind?” Confusion tinting the words.

“My legs are short… What if I can’t run fast enough? Daddy runs so fast!”

George sighed, air escaping him in something like a laugh. “None of you can run as fast as your daddy yet, and that’s okay!” He dipped his head lower to meet eyes with Spirit, cradling the pup’s face between his hands. “I promise. Your legs are still too short, you haven’t finished growing yet! One day you’ll be bigger, and then you can run fast and keep up easily. But for now, I promise that you won’t be left behind. Dream will look after you, okay?”

“That’s right!” Dusk chimed in, her tail a blur as it wagged behind her. “And you can stick with me, Spirit! I’ll help you too!”

“Really?” Wide eyes betrayed cautious hope.

“Yes!”

“There you go, see?” George scooped Dusk and Spirit up with an arm each, exercising his limited strength to cuddle them closer to him. “You’ll be extra safe with both Dusk and your daddy looking after you. Just enjoy yourself, little dove.”

Spirit nodded, a little more confident this time, and Dusk giggled as George placed them both back down on the straw, letting them wriggle away to join their siblings. He watched them throw themselves into the squirming pile, wrestling amongst each other in a blur of brown fur and flailing tails.

Lifting his gaze, his eyes locked with Dream, who had leaned back a little from the writhing pups to huff fondly at their antics. And oh, the smile his mate gave when his focus shifted to him was so proud and full of love that George wondered if he may cry at having received it.

“Alright then,” Dream said, turning back towards the pups to draw their attention away from their playfighting and back onto him. “You can all come on a trip outside with me.”

A chorus of excited yaps rang out, and Echo’s little voice piped up. “Will you teach us how to hunt, daddy?”

Dream laughed. “Little one, you are still too small for that! I will give the lessons once you are older.” He reached to pet her on the head, scratching gently around her horns and ruffling her fur. “You may watch me hunt. We shall bring home some food for your mother, too.”

George found a smile stuck to his face with the pups’ infectious happiness, the fact that there was little he could do to settle their incessant bounding around him dripping off his back like water. He instead accepted all their joyful licks to his face, cuddling his pups close and kissing their heads before letting them slip away to surround his mate as he rose from the nest.

He dipped his head down low to nuzzle fondly against George’s cheek, leaving a warm tingling behind when Dream turned away once more, padding to the centre of the room and glancing first upwards, then down at his children who were crowding around his feet. “Come on then, little nightmares,” He grumbled affectionately, drawing his tentacles out of his back and extending them towards the pups, scooping them up and holding them secure even as they were lifted off the cold stone floor, their legs dangling below them and delighted giggles sounding from them like bells. “It will be a small relief when you are agile enough to leap from this room yourself.”

“Jump, daddy! Jump!” Dawn squealed, wriggling in the tentacle’s careful hold.

“I will!” Dream turned his head to George one last time. “We will return later, darling. With hope I will get enough chance to hunt that I may bring you home some food!”

George laughed. “Good luck.”

A smile before he turned away, and with a readying crouch, Dream had jumped through the ceiling and he and their little pack of pups had sauntered away into the forest outside.

George was left watching the last tail flick out of sight and willing them to return safely, then gazing around the dark, now-quiet room. A long, soft sigh slipped from his lungs and whispered into the warm silence, and George flopped back down onto the nest, stretching out into the space left by Dream and the pups and taking in the hushed relief of being alone for a little while. He loved the pups, well enough to willingly throw himself before danger to keep them from harm, but it was impossible to ignore the exhaustion they dragged him into with their barks of happy greeting

in the early mornings and their squirming in the nest at night with supplies of energy that seemed to stretch on into the infinite. It was pleasant to have a semblance of serenity, if even for a short time. He'd occasionally find himself missing the thick, almost suffocating silence that would surround him and Dream before the birth of the pups, when they were the only souls residing in the ruin and the pups were but the size of beans nestled in his belly, but so much more powerful than that inkling of the past was the loving, the longing to be so utterly, wonderfully surrounded by the warmth of his family for even longer than his lifespan was able to afford. Really, was there any longing more powerful? More overwhelming, more all-encompassing, more bright and warm than even the sun goddess above could ever hope to replicate?

If George found it all too easy to doze off to the images of domestic bliss swirling gently in his head then that wasn't the business of anyone but himself. It was when he was alone, after all, that more unwelcome thoughts rippled across his mind, disturbing his still, glassy waters with memories, pebbles - the shards of a past life he now held no interest in even glimpsing, much less experiencing again. The reassuring mumbles of familial warmth and noise smoothed it over, brushed away the dust, calmed his springs and lakes; his waters stilled to be disturbed by nothing other than the excited splashes of tiny paws and the slower wading of a set much bigger. It was almost magical, the golden threads of devotion woven like a blanket to guard against the shadows, to lull him to sleep so effortlessly. Maybe it *was* magical. George could recall one of their pups, Dawn, stirring him at night with whimpers of fear; the darkness lurking in the room around them seeming to move, shadows warping into creeping tendrils through a child's wary eye. It had been perhaps a parent's rite of passage, George whispering soothing promises into his pup's ear and stroking his fur. "It's alright, see?" He'd pressed with a kiss to Dawn's head. "You glow! We all glow, and that keeps the scary darkness away. It's magic. *You're* magic."

It had been enough to settle the pup's nerves, the assurance of magic, the glow of protection against the darkness. George crossed it with stepping stones; the lake still around him. The assurance of magic. *He* was magic now, was he not? His own horns, his own glow, his own tentacles. His soul must no longer bear the human signature, he had been absent from that life far too long. And wasn't that a wonderful thought? Dream had taken him, taken a lowly human soul, aimless and alone, and had turned him *magical*. He had never shown any affinity for magic as a child, could never have hoped to possess it, and yet here he was, magic in his veins as old as the forest itself, and a family surrounding him whose own magic served as his light, his protection from the darkness, his blanket to lull him soundly to sleep.

Sleep. When had George fallen asleep?

He woke up rubbing his eyes, the room around him still dark, still, quiet. They hadn't returned yet, it must not have been long. It wasn't too much of a concern - the peach light of sunset was just barely visible above, they'd be home before nightfall. George busied himself with mindlessly tidying the nest, tucking blankets back into place and fluffing up the straw.

Indeed, it wasn't a significant amount of time later until the familiar sound of silvery bell-like laughter and clumsy little pawsteps tumbled into his ears, and he looked up with a smile to see five small faces staring down at him from the ledge above.

"Mama!" Echo cried happily, "Did you miss us?"

"Of course I missed you!" George called back, a grin stretching his cheeks. "Did you have a good time? Where's your daddy?"

"I am here, my beloved." Dream's face appeared above the pups, his expression weary but satisfied. "Everyone is safe, not one of us was harmed."

He began to pick the pups up and tuck them under his arms, preparing to drop down into the room. Echo seemed to have other ideas, though, throwing herself off the ledge without a second thought, leaving George scrambling to try to catch her before she landed on the cold stone floor. His attempts were successful, and the overeager pup landed directly on top of him, leaving him winded and heaving for breath.

“Gods, Echo, you could have given me a warning.”

The pup just laughed, rolling off George’s body and into the nest. “It was so much fun, mama! Daddy took us walking all the way to the river, and then he let us watch him chase prey!”

“Oh wow, that does sound like fun!” George replied, watching Echo bounce around him like a jumping flea while Dream dropped down from the floor above and placed down the rest of the pups. “Did you learn a lot?”

“Yes!” Her little tail wagged so hard it became nothing more than a streak of brown and green. “I ate a lot too, it was tasty! Mama, I can’t wait until I can go hunting too! Daddy says I have to wait until I’m big enough to leap across the river without falling in...”

“That’s right,” Dream said, wandering up behind the two and scooping Echo into his arms, ruffling her fur and laughing while the pup squealed. “You’re too small yet! Can’t have your prey escaping from you now, can we?”

Their laughter faded into the background when George’s attention was caught by a pup clambering into his lap. “Mama?”

“Hm? Hey Dusk, sweetheart, how did it go? Was Spirit okay?”

“Oh! Yes, mama, Spirit was okay! He was a bit scared at first, but there wasn’t anything scary in the forest so he didn’t have to be scared anymore!” She stopped for a moment, staring up at George intensely and then glancing over at Dream, looking thoughtful. “Mama, can I, um, ask you a- a question?”

He stroked her gently on the head. “Of course you can, little dove. What was it?”

“Why did, um- Why did the human daddy was chasing look a bit like you? It ran on two legs and it didn’t have fur like we do. It didn’t run as fast as the deer did, either.” She looked up at George again, tilting her head. “And you only have some fur. Not all over you, like us or like daddy.”

George froze, something unwelcome creeping up inside his chest. It was so easy to forget, sometimes, when he was surrounded by his mate and the pups he’d created, when they were laying together inside their nest, inside their home and when they were so tightly intertwined, skin to skin and soul to soul, that he hadn’t always been like them. That, still, he *wasn’t* entirely like them. That he’d been shaped in Dream’s image, but only halfway. It felt so sudden, as harsh and cold and brutal as the first frost of winter, to be hit with the reminder that as much as he ignored it, part of him was still *human*.

“Mama?”

He should have known the pups would ask about it at some point, their curiosity and hunger for the world were far too great to keep things from them, to brush over it like the fact was nothing more than dust on the floor.

“Yes,” He finally said, his words coming out slowly and a little more shaky than he’d like them to be. He couldn’t keep this a secret from his pups, and a part of him was glad Dusk had gathered the

thought to ask, even if she was perhaps still too young to fully understand what his answer truly meant yet. "I look a bit like a human because I- I used to be a human."

Dusk's eyes were wide, a little gasp escaping her. "Really?"

He nodded. "Your daddy - he wanted me to be his mate instead, so I stayed with him and he helped me to grow paws and horns and a tail, just like his!" Memories of the details prodded at his mind, and he stubbornly pushed them back. His pups didn't need to know the how, or the why he stayed with Dream, nor the how or why of his beast features growing. Maybe he was pretending he could forget them. Maybe he was deluding himself.

Dusk looked like she was thinking again, pondering over the new information. "We eat humans," She said after a moment. "Why didn't daddy eat you?"

"He... He needed my help." George gazed over to Dream, his mate waving his tail around while the other pups tried to grab onto it. "He needed a mate who used to be human." He looked down at Dusk again. "Some humans want to hurt you, you see. Some humans use magic to hurt pups like you."

"Why?"

"They're scared because we hunt them. They send slayers with strong magic to get rid of pups. That's why we needed to protect you. Because I... used to be human, it protects you from human magic. It keeps you safe."

Dusk hummed. "Do you think I could have a human mate in the future?"

George smiled softly, petting Dusk's head and scratching gently around her horns until she purred contentedly. Was it wise to encourage his precious pup to force another human through the same experience he *knew* he'd been subjected to? As much as he tried to ignore it, as much as he buried himself in the comfort of acquired apathy, even toxic fondness, towards the things he knew Dream had *forced* him into, he knew that at another time, in another life, he would have been horrified at what he'd become now. If his pup grew into Dream's pawprint and found herself a human to keep and control and dote upon, would he be proud?

"Maybe," He responded simply. "You could, and maybe you will."

"Darling?" Dream's voice rumbled from behind them, and George turned to look up at his mate, standing with a chunk of meat in his hands and Hope and Dawn dangling from his tail.

"Love," George replied.

Dream smiled, passing the meat into George's hands and scooping Dusk up before she could steal a bite for herself. "I brought you food. The pups ate when we were out."

George's heart swelled. "Thank you."

The meat was warm and fresh, scorched gently by Dream's flames, and George ate hungrily. His appetite had been growing as of late, and the taste of meat was particularly satisfying, more so than the vegetables and berries he usually ate. The pups hadn't long stopped feeding from him, George reasoned, it made sense that he was still eating more. Dream was all too happy to provide, of course, leaving for a hunt any time George or the pups expressed their hunger.

It was paradise to have such a wonderful mate, George mused as he licked his hands clean and sat back to watch Dream shoo all the pups into the nest around him. What heaven existed that could

possibly be more divine than this? Surely none could compare to the giggles of tiny beings that filtered into his ears, nor to the warmth of their bodies as they settled down into the straw surrounding him, their tails looping around his legs for the comfort of connection. Nor, indeed, to the solid, cosy presence of Dream pacing around the nest before laying down and cuddling close to his mate and pups, his tail circling the whole family like a promise of protection.

No heaven could compare to this.

It was heaven enough for George to press his head against his mate's soft chest, to sigh in intimate contentment and let his eyes slip close to the quiet rhythms of his pups' breathing, to share in their warmth and ignore when tiny paws kicked his side in clumsy, sleepy movements, to smile fondly and to fall softly asleep to a familiar murmur.

"Sleep well, Georgie."

gone is the vision, take me out of the shell

Chapter Notes

here it finally is: the last chapter.

thank you as always for your patience! <3 i know this has taken even longer than usual, and that's because i wanted to make sure i was completely happy with it. the extra time spent was worth it i feel :]

enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When George awoke, rubbing half-heartedly at his sleepy eyes with the back of his paw, it was to a nest that was a little colder, a little emptier than usual. Pushing himself up on his forearms, he smiled down at the five pairs of horns glowing below him, shining up from the furry bodies entangled together in the straw. His pups were all there still, at least.

It was when he turned his head to glance at the space behind him where Dream usually lay that George noticed the absence. His mate had carefully disentangled himself from the pile of sleepy pups and left the nest at some point, only a patch of slightly warm, flattened hay indicating he hadn't been gone for long.

George sat up a little more, sweeping his eyes around the room but landing on nothing but the soft silvery moonbeams, dawn having not quite stretched its peachy orange arms into the sky outside. It was still night yet, dark, quiet, still. With a gentle sigh, George stood up slowly, following the path of the moonbeams back to where they slipped down from the hole in the ceiling above him.

"Dream?" He called up softly, careful not to wake his sleeping pups. "Are you up there?"

Nothing but silence hung in response for a moment, before the padding and quiet scuffing of feet across stone made his ears prick up towards the noise. Dream's face appeared over the ledge a second later, lit up in his familiar green glow.

"George," The beast smiled fondly. "Come up here, join me."

George nodded, stepping back a little to let Dream drop down into the room, then letting himself be picked up in big, strong hands before Dream leaped back up onto the ledge and set him down gently. They stepped forward together out into the cool forest, Dream ducking through the doorway while George stood ahead, where the stone steps of the ruin met the dirt of the forest floor. It was peaceful, to be able to gaze into the depths of tangled foliage and dark canopy cover and not to feel fear, hesitancy or discomfort, nothing but familiarity and comfort. This was his home, this ruin, this forest. It protected him, shielded him, blanketed him in its greenery. He felt secure here, confident even.

He turned his head to see Dream gazing at him, soft, unreadable. The beast was standing to the side of the ruin, and when George met eyes with him he tipped his head up towards the stone columns and worn carvings that lined the walls of the temple. George watched as Dream raised a foot up onto one of the broken columns, using it to push himself further up the wall. Another glance over

and another gently urging gesture, and George turned away from the forest that stretched out ahead of him and instead made his way to Dream's side, following him carefully as the beast picked his way up the side of the ruin, looping his tail around George when his mate needed the support to climb up behind him.

The roof of the temple was surprisingly sturdy, well-carved dark stone tiles slotted together and leaving the two with a secure enough footing that they could make their way to the top of the roof; they sat close together and bathed in dying moonlight as they looked out across the treetops, the first light of dawn splitting the star-speckled ink far in the distance. The moss clinging to the tiles was cool against George's legs, Dream's firm body warm against his back. Their pups slumbered safely below. The air was still and fresh, scented of the early morning dew as it settled around them.

"They're leaving today," Dream murmured, his words coming out heavy and tinged with something bittersweet.

George sighed, an echoed sentiment. "They are."

It had seemed like only yesterday that their pups had been tiny, sleepy, crying with their eyes closed and their little bodies able to be held in George's hands and tucked under his belly. He was hardly able to believe the speed at which they had grown, had proved themselves by walking on unsteady legs, then running, then leaping, then chasing down their own prey, giggling and babbling excitedly about their achievements while they were praised by their proud parents. Of course, George knew they couldn't stay with him and Dream in the ruin forever, he knew they had to leave to find homes of their own, mates of their own, he knew they had to strike out to achieve what they'd been raised to be capable of. He couldn't keep them held so close anymore, not when they were clamouring for freedom and the taste of a new life. After all, didn't he too once set out from home with nothing but the urge to explore? Certainly, he'd never have found his true home if he hadn't taken that chance. He was happy, even excited, for his pups to set out to experience the world for themselves.

And yet... He couldn't help but feel a hollowness in his chest, as if a part of his soul was slowly detaching itself, one cut thread at a time, strings that constricted around his lungs, his neck, forcing choked longing up his throat in heavy stones that he stubbornly swallowed back down. He couldn't help but feel a sorrow, a disconnection, mourning and missing his beloved pups though they hadn't yet left the safety of their temple. He'd known this day had been approaching ever since Dream had returned from hunting with a bloodstained Echo following close behind, a glimmer in her eye and excitement spilling from her tongue. She'd sat cosied up next to her mama, rambling endlessly about seeking out her own hunting grounds while George gently combed out her tangled fur, her siblings slowly returning one by one with gifts of hunting spoils, and he'd known. He'd known they would one day outgrow their childhood home and venture out on their own. It didn't make the inevitable hurt any less though, not as the break of dawn crept closer and brought with it the sinking realisation that by the fall of night, he and Dream would be alone once more.

It hurt, of course it did. It stung him like nettles in his guts.

"If I had known this is what my mother felt when I and the rest of my litter left home, I would never have wished to go."

Dream's words snapped George's spiralling thoughts, and he tilted his head to look up at his mate. Dream was staring out across the forest, a calm, sorrowful look in his eyes. He breathed out a sigh through his nose, a light mist in the cool morning.

"What was it like?" George ventured. "Leaving home?"

Dream lowered his chin until his chin rested gently on top of George's, both of them now gazing out at the inky purple giving way to soft pinks and oranges in the distant sky. "It was everything I had ever wanted," He murmured, his words rumbling quietly against the back of George's neck. "For so long I had longed to leave- Mother had taught us all she knew, and all I wished for was to go and try it all, to follow in her footsteps and find a territory of my own. Sapnap and I were the first of our litter to leave, and we travelled together for much of the way." He huffed lightly, his breath warm against George's cheek. "In our haste, we never noticed which direction our siblings turned, nor which trail they took. I am sure that if I travelled far enough, I would meet some of them again, but..." He trailed off for a moment. "I do not feel the need anymore. I must not have seen them for so many moons now that I wonder if we would even get along!" He finished the last sentence with a short chuckle, and George turned to look up at his mate once more.

"And what about your mother?" He asked softly. "Do you ever wish you could visit her?"

Dream's silence hung in the air, weary and wistful. His tail snaked from behind him to curl around George and pull him comfortingly close, tucking him up against the thick fur of Dream's chest. George reached up to scratch gently at Dream's cheek, the action a soothe as much as a distraction.

"Mother never truly settled anywhere," Dream said finally, his words little more than a fond, melancholy whisper. "She would always move, always travel. She barely stayed in one place long enough to raise us. I... do not believe she ever felt safe anywhere. Not safe enough to stay."

He fell silent again then, but George sensed he had more to say yet. He let Dream sit for a moment without prying for more, patient in the stillness of the moment. He entwined his tail with the beast's, then gently drew Dream's hands to rest over his own body, huge claws caging in his chest and stomach. *Safety*, it said. *I am safe with you, and you with me.* It broke Dream from his wandering thoughts, and he turned his head to smile softly down at George, who returned a smile of his own along with a gentle squeeze of Dream's finger.

The silence felt a little more peaceful then.

It was another moment before Dream spoke again, his words so quiet they were almost lost with the night sky. "I do not think I would find her even if I went searching. As much as I would wish to see her again, I believe I never will. I think..." He squeezed a little around George, shuffling in place and shaking his head slowly. "As long as she is safe, wherever she may be, I do not mind that. And I do believe that she is safe. I have my home here now. Mother would not want me to abandon what I have found for myself, just for the chance to see her."

George saw the shimmer at the corner of Dream's eye. He... had never seen his mate cry before, had he?

"She would be proud of you, Dreamie."

Dream made a soft noise, tilting his head downwards to tuck it against George's shoulder, squeezing his eyes shut and mumbling against his mate's skin. "I hope she would."

"You made a home, found a mate, created a family," George said, reaching to wipe at the corners of Dream's eyes with the heel of his paw. "You followed all that she taught you, and you're here with me now. You've raised your own pups and they're about to leave home." He smiled, stroking Dream's cheek. "Of course she'd be proud of you. Why wouldn't she be?"

A deep, contented purr rumbled from Dream's chest as he leaned his head into George's touch. "I wish she may have lived close by, that she may have seen me grow more after I left her. That she may have seen you, my perfect mate, and my... Our wonderful pups."

George purred back in lieu of a response, tilting his head to lean against Dream, and humming lightly as the first peek of the sun itself emerged above the distant horizon beyond the trees. They stayed there, the morning slow, peaceful, the seconds long as their bodies shifted with breaths against each other, gentle vibrations through each of their chests.

Though a doubt wriggled into his mind then, small and quiet, with bittersweet taste and stinging thorns.

“Dream?” He lifted his head, stirring the beast from his own thoughts.

“Hm?”

“Do you think...” George trailed off for a second, looking down at his paws and fidgeting slightly. His voice slipped out with a slight wobble, and it stung as he bit his lip. “Will our pups visit us sometimes?”

He glanced back up at Dream, who sighed softly, rubbing his thumbs in light, warm circles on George’s skin, his huge paws brushing gently over his chest and hips, one travelling upwards to cup George’s face with such tenderness he felt his heart ache. “I hope so darling,” Dream mumbled, his sentence punctuated with a turn of his head and a kiss to George’s jaw. “I do not think I could bear to mourn their absence for however many moons I have left.”

George looked upwards to where the pale moon was steadily retreating alongside the inky night, her silvery light now seeming dim in comparison with the bright golden on the horizon. “I... hope so too. I can’t even imagine how quiet it’s going to feel without them around.” He dragged the back of his paw over his face, a clumsy attempt to hide the way his eyes watered. “I really do hope they visit.”

Dream hummed, warm. “I should like them to see their little siblings, when we have our next litter of pups.”

George felt his cheeks heating up, a fluttery feeling deep in his stomach. “Our next litter?”

“Mm,” Dream replied, cupping one paw around George’s stomach. “I can stuff you with many more pups yet, darling.”

He tilted his head to catch George’s eye again, smiling fondly at his mate. “I know you like being filled, my love. We both wish for your belly to be round with pups again, do we not?”

“I- Yes, Dream. Always.” George pressed a paw to the warmth of his flushed cheeks, huffing out a laugh. “I mean, if it’s lonely without our pups, why not have more to fill the space?”

“Exactly,” Dream chuckled. He looked back up and out at the sunrise again then, though he took George’s paws in his own, idly stroking and playing with them. “Georgie?”

“Mm?”

“I want to give you something. You have earned it, and I want to keep you with me.” Fingers gently circling George’s wrists. “You are the greatest thing I have ever found, my most perfect creation, my dearest love. I could not lose you, Georgie, I could not even imagine it.” Arms closing around George, warm, protective, safe. *Loving*. “I want to give you my forever.”

“Your... forever?”

Dream shifted behind him, a small nod. “Will you let me give you that?”

“Anything, Dream.” George leaned back into the warmth, into the safety, into the love. “I will take anything from you. Whatever you can give me-” He dipped his head to press a kiss to Dream’s arm, curled around him. “-I will take it, and I will love it. Anything from you.”

“Thank you, darling.”

George smiled. “Will you tell me what it is?”

Dream shook his head. “Not yet, but soon. After the pups have left.” He nuzzled softly against George. “They are our stars for today.”

George turned to kiss Dream’s cheek, smiling against his fur. “That’s okay,” He mumbled. “I can wait.”

The sky split asunder in streaks of soft pinks and brilliant golds, wide canvas lit up by the emerging sunlight as the two watched, bodies curled up warm against each other and breaths intermingled, both reluctant to move and stir the air around them even as the forest around them began to awake, the morning song of birds and the calls of deer echoing up from the beneath the trees.

The significance of the day couldn’t be put off forever, but for a little longer, maybe.

Dream was the first to shift, gently untangling himself from George and pushing himself to stand up on all fours, his tail swinging slowly behind him as he looked down at his mate with all the fondness he had. “Come on, Georgie, our stars are waiting.”

George followed easily, looping his tail loosely around Dream’s own as they made their way back across dark stone tiles and down the crumbling walls of the temple, stumbling a little when they reached the bottom and following the path of cracked columns and uneven stones back around to the entrance of their home.

It had been so long ago now that George had first stumbled upon this place, naive and lost, a wanderer with no tether. Now, as he looked upon the ruin with eyes ringed in green and heart set cradled by fur and claws, he saw nothing but his *rightful* place, a place where he was loved and owned, where he had created and grown his own family, where he *belonged*.

They paused after stepping through the doorway, Dream crouching to let George climb onto him before he dropped off the ledge down into the room below.

“Father? Mama?” A teal-horned head rose from the pile of sleepy pups, Hope shaking sleep from her eyes and looking at them curiously. “Where have you been? You weren’t here when I awoke.”

“We were watching the sunrise, sweetheart,” George smiled as he slid down from Dream’s side and stood in front of the nest, reaching to scratch his daughter gently on the head. “How about you? I do hope you slept well.”

Dream made a noise of agreement from behind him, shuffling around with a pile of blankets. “You have a tiring day ahead.”

Hope sighed. “I know.” She stood up slowly, disturbing her sleeping siblings with soft grunts as she picked her way out of the crowded nest and wound her soft body around George’s, leaning on him gently. “It doesn’t seem real, to know that tomorrow I’ll wake up in a completely different place, and that you won’t be there.”

“Do you not feel ready to leave? I know it must be hard.”

“No, I do. I know I am ready to go. I’m okay with that. I know I cannot simply stay here forever. I just-” She huffed, her eyes cast downwards for a moment before flicking back over to her siblings in the nest. “It will be so different from the life I know now. I hope you understand? I won’t be waking up alongside you any more. It’s going to be... strange.”

George rubbed his fingers gently around the base of Hope’s horns, smiling when a comforted sigh fell from her. “I understand. Remember when I told you about the town I came from? When I first left home it was strange for me as well. I missed the feeling of knowing the place where I stayed, I missed having somewhere I could call home. It was the sense of adventure that kept me going.” He turned his head to see Dream gazing at him and their daughter, a soft, unreadable expression on his face. George turned back to Hope. “Of course, I eventually found this place, and I finally had somewhere new I could call home. You’ll find the same.”

“I can’t wait until I have my own territory, I want to find the best home and hunting grounds I can!” Another voice chimed in, muffled for a moment before bright blue eyes emerged from underneath one of the blankets lining the nest, and four legs stretched upwards, clawed paws kneading the air.

George shook his head, laughing. “I know, Dawn. You might have to compete with Echo for the best hunting grounds though, you know what she’s like.”

As if on cue, Echo’s head rose from the nest, a huge, sleepy yawn showing off all her teeth before snapping together in a grin, an uncanny similarity to the way Dream yawned. “I heard my name, Mama, I hope it’s only about how good I am?” She rolled over, nipping playfully at Dawn’s tail before looking over at George, her ears flopping over the green of her horns as she tilted her head.

“Of course,” Dream had strolled back over to the nest, and George was struck by how tall their pup now seemed, reaching about two-thirds of Dream’s height when she stood up. Dream seemed unfazed, only pride in his eyes. “Your mother was admiring your hunting ability. We only suggest that you and your brother do not fight over it!” He chuckled, batting away the tail swung half-heartedly at him. “There is plenty of prey to go around, you will all be able to find your own hunting grounds.”

Spirit and Dusk had woken up by now, purple and yellow horns joining the greens and blues of their parents and siblings as they stretched and stood up. Dusk trotted over to where George stood with Hope, pressing up against his other side to trap him in between his daughters, affectionate nuzzles traded between them.

“What paths will you take when you leave the forest?” George asked, the question directed at the both of them as they basked in his closeness for one last time.

Dusk hummed thoughtfully. “I’d like to follow the mountain trail to the West, I want to see what lies beyond there. Father said he hadn’t been that way before. What about you, Hope?”

“I will follow the plains, I think. Avoiding the human villages, of course, but I would like to find another ruin much like this one. Though I will visit you if I can, sister!”

“Yes, and I may say the same!” Dusk smiled, before looking over at the rest of her siblings. “I believe Dawn and Echo are considering travelling together through the scorched wastes and going separate ways from there. Am I correct, Dawn?”

The pup in question looked up from where he was wrestling with his sister, shaking her off his tail.

“That’s right! We should like to meet uncle Sapnap if we can. He still lives there, doesn’t he?”

“He does,” Dream agreed, enjoying his pups’ excited talk. “He knows of my pups’ existence, but he has not seen you yet! I imagine he would be proud of how strong you have grown, just as I am.” He scratched Dawn’s head, ruffling the fur around his horns. “If you do see him, be sure to pass on the message that I would be pleased to see him again. It has been many moons since we last hunted together, and I do miss him!”

“We’ll be sure to tell him, father,” Echo laughed. “Though if he wants to go hunting, I’ll tell him I’m better at it than you now!”

“You little wretch! I have not yet seen you kill more than two all at once, you have a long way to go!”

George giggled, turning to Dawn. “Just be careful not to bother Sapnap if he has a mate with him,” He explained, his mind casting back to Sapnap’s previous visit and Dream’s encouragement for his brother to find a mate of his own. “He may be more territorial as he doesn’t know you. Be respectful, okay?”

Dawn nodded. “I will. I will try and make sure Echo will, too.”

Dusk smiled, shaking her head. “Good luck with that.” She glanced over at the nest, where her final sibling was sitting quietly, paws tucked under him as he listened to his family’s chatter. “How about you, Spirit? What of your travel plans?”

“Oh! Me?” Spirit looked almost caught off-guard. “Um, I think I will go South. Or West? South-West maybe. Uh-” He shook his head. “Either way. I would like to find a home along the coast.”

“The coast?” Hope tilted her head.

Spirit nodded. “Remember when father told us about the um- the ocean? I would like to see it, at least. If I do not like it I will find somewhere else, but...” He smiled sheepishly. “I like how father described it. If I can find somewhere to live, maybe I shall make a home there.”

George smiled, beckoning Spirit over so he could reach to scratch him behind the ears. “It is nice. The town where I used to live was close to the ocean. The air smells fresh along the coast. I hope you do find a home there, Spirit.”

The pup beamed. “Thank you, mama.”

Dream gazed with shining pride at his pups. “You all shall find homes and mates, I know you shall. Remember to stay close to the cover of the forest until nightfall; it is safer for now if you wait to travel under the moon, rather than the sun’s light. Do not stray too close to human villages, either.”

“Father! We know! You must think we are foolish if you are warning us of that again.”

Dream turned to send a glare Echo’s way, but there was little heat behind it. “Do not dare to ruin my good mood, Echo!” He shook his head. “You would do well to take care not to begin any fights, with our kind or others. I know you are strong, but I should not like to hear of you being injured.”

Echo’s expression softened a little at that. “I will be careful, father, I promise.” She shoved her head against Dream’s side, a nuzzle disguised as a gesture not so fond. “I want you to be proud of me.”

Dream smiled, a soft mirror of the sunlight dappled across the stone tiles above them. "I am proud of you. I may only wish you the best once you leave here."

A strange kind of tension settled across the room, nervous and warm and held down beneath fidgeting paws. George breathed it in, it nestled under his lungs, twined around his heart, stung behind his eyes. This was it, he supposed. The moment when it really sunk in for him, for all of them, that they would be parting ways for one final time. It had seemed such a distant prospect for so long, something to be brushed off, brushed past, something that would happen tomorrow, always tomorrow. Never today.

And yet here he stood, surrounded by the children he now had to bid his farewells to. Today, finally, had arrived.

Hope and Dusk on either side of him seemed to sense his sudden flux in emotion, curling their tails around him as they pressed closer, taking the weight when George suddenly sagged his weight against Hope, throwing his arms around her and clinging on for the little time he had left with her, face buried in the fur of her back as he blinked back the stinging behind his eyelids. Behind him, he felt Dusk wind her tail around his before resting her head on his back. "Mama, it's okay," reached his ears, though from whom he couldn't be sure. Slowly he felt the warmth surrounding him grow, each of his pups nuzzling close, their tails curling loosely around his limbs, their heads lying heavy around his own, their fur brushing his skin. Tongues darted out to lick affectionately at him, his cheek receiving a sloppy kiss when he raised his head from Hope's fur.

He rubbed the back of his paw over his eyes, his fur coming away speckled with sparkling tears. So much for blinking them away.

"Are you alright, darling?"

"I- Yes, I'm okay," George gave a watery smile at Dream's concerned expression, reaching to place his paw in the one that was offered to him, and letting the gentle swoop of Dream's thumb across the back of his hand soothe his worried heart. "It's just..." He cast his eyes around the room, his pups all gazing at him with faces of soft worry. "I'll miss you all, so much."

"We will miss you too, mama," Spirit said, his voice barely above his usual volume but soothing nevertheless to George's anxieties. "Perhaps we can visit sometimes? I would hate to never see you or father again."

George nodded eagerly, forcing his remaining tears back. "Yes! Yes of course, I would love for you to visit." He sighed. "It's hard to believe you're so grown up. Even if you do visit, I'll still miss you every day you're not here."

He calmed his breathing with slow, deep breaths, wiping the last remnants of salt from his eyelashes before smiling at his family around him. "I promise, I'm okay. I don't want today's farewells to be sad ones. I'm proud of you all, and I am happy that you're finally strong enough to travel out on your own. No matter where you may be, I'll be thinking about you. I love you so, so much."

"Mama... We love you too," Dusk batted her head lightly against George's shoulder. "We'll stay safe, and we'll make you proud. And I promise, I will visit as much as I can."

Noises of agreement sounded from every one of the pups, each of them with their own sincere expression. "Us too, mama. I promise we'll visit."

Silence settled again, though this time the warmth was light, hopeful. Tinged with sadness, not

soaked with it. Comfortable, reassuring, wound with threads of gold.

Echo glanced upwards towards the opening in the ceiling, then over at Dream, tail twitching in anticipation. Dream simply nodded, and one by one the pups took a step back from George, pointing their noses up at the ledge and crouching their legs in preparation.

Echo was the first to leap, not to George's surprise nor anyone else's. Her sense of adventure and eagerness for independence had always given her the push ahead, the daring that her siblings were slower to gather the courage for. She'd been the first of them to make the leap for the exit, a fiery determination to follow her father pushing her to attempt it over and over again as her siblings slept. George couldn't help but smile at the memory. The first to learn, now the first to leave.

Hope followed a second later, a scrape of her claws sounding against the stone as she trailed her sister outside. Dawn next, then Dusk, and finally, with a nod of encouragement from Dream, Spirit made the jump, scrabbling for his balance before trotting outside after his siblings.

Dream looked down at George with a smile and a tilt of his head, holding out his paw for his mate to take. "Come on, love, it is time to see them go."

George nodded, sliding his paw into Dream's and allowing his mate to pull him up into his arms, cuddling close as Dream himself made the leap up onto the ledge above and carried him through the doorway to where their pups waited outside, expectant and eager.

Their heads turned to greet him as Dream placed him down, and he took the opportunity to commit each of their faces to memory, to tuck them safely away in his head and his heart before they drifted away out of sight. Who could say how many years it may be before he can lay eyes on them again? No, he would keep their portraits fresh in his mind, a canvas collection lovingly cared for no matter where their subjects may be, flowers blooming around the frames.

Before any of them could speak, could wish him farewell, George found himself stepping forwards.

He took each of his pups' faces in his paws in turn, caressing the fur on their cheeks between his fingers as he leaned to plant kisses on their noses, one by one. A little row of his beloved pups left in his wake, giggles and fond smiles gracing his senses as he finally stepped back once more.

"I've said this already, I know, but... I'll miss you. And I'll love you, no matter where you may be. Always." He took a deep breath, feeling the pricking of tears behind his eyes again, blinking them away successfully this time before he finished speaking. "I'm proud of you all."

Dream nodded, rubbing his tail gently over George's back before curling it comfortingly around his leg. "And I may say the same. I could not be more happy, nor proud, of each and every one of you."

"Thank you mama, thank you father," Hope replied, soft and sincere and weighed with so much meaning. Her siblings mumbled their agreements, a chorus of heartsick thank yous. "We could not be more grateful."

None of them spoke for a moment, the morning birdsong and rustle of leaves rippling through their silence as the pups hesitantly shuffled their feet, the air heavy with a preemptive longing, the excitement of what lay ahead stained with sickly pink wistfulness.

"Well," Dawn was the first to break the silence, turning away from his parents. "I don't believe I shall ever wish to leave if I stay here any longer." He took a few steps forward into the forest, Echo snapping out of her thoughts at the movement and striding over to join him. They both looked back

over their shoulders for one last glimpse at their family, their tails wagging slowly behind them. "Farewell, father and mama."

George watched as they walked off together into the trees, and they were gone.

"I suppose it is time for me to leave, too," Spirit sighed, smiling for a last time at his parents. "Goodbye mama, father, I'll miss you. I shall visit when I can."

He trotted away down one of the forest trails, George and Dream watching until he too was out of sight.

Hope nuzzled each of her parents before turning away. "Farewell; may we all be healthy and content when we meet again."

She walked away, reaching the edge of the small clearing and glancing back one last time before vanishing into the undergrowth.

George sighed, turning to Dusk before chuckling softly. "I don't suppose you've suddenly decided to stay?"

Dusk shook her head, a lopsided smile on her face. "You know I cannot stay here forever. I shall have to say farewell now, too. I will come to visit sometimes, though." She wandered over to where the forest came close to the side of the temple, her claws fidgeting with little pieces of moss on the cobblestones as she turned to say farewell. "I'll miss you. I do hope I make you proud. Goodbye mama, goodbye father."

Two steps, five steps, ten steps away, and their final pup was gone with the rustle of leaves and the distant birdsong.

George's mate turned to him, offering a silent paw. George took it.

Larger fingers curled securely around his own as they turned and slipped back through the doorway of their ruined temple home. Back into the dark, into the quiet. George curled up into Dream's arms when they dropped down from the ledge, and he was placed back down in a room that suddenly felt so much more empty.

He stood there for a moment, frozen in the empty space, aimless, restless. His hands twitched at his sides until he wrapped his arms around himself. It was quiet, too quiet. Too cold. Too empty.

"Darling."

Dream's warm voice snapped him from his slowly spiralling thoughts, a heavy hand wrapping gently over his shoulders.

"We will be okay. Our pups will be okay," Dream mumbled softly, his tail circling George and pulling him closer. "I know it does not feel the same now they have just left, but we must be happy for them."

George nodded, leaning his head into Dream's soft chest. "It will lessen with time, I know. It's just..." He gestured around the dark room. "It's hard, not having them here, and knowing they're not coming home soon."

George felt Dream's hand run down his back, thumb stroking soothingly over George's spine, and he relaxed against the warmth of Dream's body until his mate abruptly stepped away, making George look up with a confused frown.

“Here, come sit,” Dream said, standing next to the nest and gently pulling George towards him once more. He settled down in the nest himself then, drawing George in to sit in his lap, and running his hands over his mate once again.

George smiled, steadying himself with a paw on Dream’s arm as he reached up to scratch gently at Dream’s cheek. Dream, in return, cupped George’s face gently in one huge paw, dipping his head to touch their noses together and cast warm puffs of breath over George’s lips as he spoke.

“Georgie... You’re so good for me, so perfect and beautiful.” The paw that wasn’t cupping George’s cheek settled on his hip, huge fingers brushing in comforting circles on his skin and tracing lightly over long-faded scars. “My wonderful mate.”

Chest filled with blossoms and warmth, George nuzzled into Dream’s touch, turning his head to press a kiss to the beast’s palm and settling his paws on his shoulders, thick fur shifting under the pads of his fingers. “I could say the same for you,” He giggled, light and fond as he curled his tail around Dream’s leg. “You look after me so well, you mean so much to me.”

Dream let out a fond huff of amusement, shaking his head. “As if I may even allow myself to do anything to hurt you, my love.” He carefully tilted George’s head up again, catching his eye before continuing his sweet sincerities. “You are the best mate I could ever have wished for, Georgie, and I want to reward you.”

“Reward me?”

Dream smiled. “It is both a reward and a gift.”

His hands travelled slowly down George’s body from his shoulders, razor-sharp claws so careful as they traced down his arms until Dream could take George’s paws in his own, warmth and promise in the way he left no air between their palms.

His expression was gentle, honest, steady as he gazed at George. “I want to give you forever, my darling, will you let me do that?”

George felt his eyes widen, confusion clouding his thoughts.

“Forever? What does that mean?”

“Forever with me. For as long as I may live, so will you. Your soul, your body, all of you shall be mine, and likewise all of me shall be yours. Forever, as much as I can give.”

There wasn’t much need for George to think about it. Not when it stretched out before him, the promise of his entire life in Dream’s hands, shaped in Dream’s image, their souls intertwined, threaded with gold and sweet blossoming vines and shimmering moonlight. Not when he had never felt more at home, more cared for, more loved. No, he had no need to think on his decision, not for even a second.

He pretended to, though, just for a moment. Schooling his expression into one of thoughtful curiosity while he played with Dream’s hands, his head tilting slightly as he gazed down at their differing paw sizes, smoothing over the fur, clicking their claws lightly together.

Slowly, steadily, he curled his fingers around Dream’s and brought the beast’s paw close, drawing it up to his chest and gently placing it over his heart, his own paw resting on top, keeping it there with delicate touch and unbreakable promise.

He slid his gaze back up from their hands to Dream’s face, his mate looking at him with so much

genuine fondness that George felt as if he may just melt under his eyes. He reached forward to place his free paw over Dream's heart, and smiled softly when he felt Dream's own free hand move to cover it.

"I will take anything you want to give me, Dream. Anything. Forever with you... I couldn't think of a gift more wonderful."

"Georgie," Dream's face lit up and he dipped his head to press a kiss to George's lips, drawing back only to murmur "I love you," before surging back against his mate and forcing his lips open to lick into his mouth, deepening their kiss and huffing fondly when George hummed and purred against him.

George struggled not to become dizzy with the press of claws at his waist and a slick tongue pushing down his throat, his head only growing lighter as the familiar, rich scent of fruit and flowers started filling his lungs. He shifted on Dream's lap in response to the flush creeping across his skin, moaning softly into the kiss and parting his legs a little under Dream's hands.

"So pretty," Dream mumbled, pulling back and letting his eyes flick over the flushed and squirming form of his mate. "You shall be even prettier before long." He let one of his hands travel up George's body, brushing over his nipples and making him shiver as it stroked up his chest, passing gently over his neck before coming to a halt against his face, cupping his cheek fondly and smiling when George's lust-blown eyes met his. "Your body will change for one final time. Are you ready, my darling?"

"Yes," George panted out. "Always, Dream. I'll take it, I need it, anything-"

"Good boy."

The tentacle that emerged from Dream's back was a blessed sight, George parting his lips easily for it and closing his eyes, humming quietly as it filled his mouth and throat and began pulsing, pumping him full of Dream's bitter magic.

"Always so perfect for me," Dream murmured, licking affectionately at George's cheek before gently pushing his mate backwards, guiding him down to lay on his back in the nest. George went easily, soft and pliable under huge, caring hands; he lay surrounded by straw and blankets and warmth and Dream, his lungs filled with flowers and fruit and his throat with the tentacle, his body boneless and gooey, his nerves set alight and skin raising with goosebumps wherever Dream touched.

Vision blurring when he cracked his eyes open, George reached blindly for his mate, whimpering when his hands were pushed back down and pinned by much stronger paws. He craved a more tender touch, a sweeter comfort as his throat squeezed involuntarily around the unceasing tentacle and he gagged a little, whining and clenching his ass when he felt it grow wet with slick.

"Sorry my love," Dream mumbled against his skin, nibbling ever-so gently at his chest before licking the spot soothingly, "I would not want you to hurt yourself during this. I promise, I will hold you soon."

George could only let out a desperate, confused moan against the tentacle stuffing his mouth full, writhing helplessly underneath Dream and looking up at his mate with pleading eyes. He was hard, aching so, and the beginnings of his transformation prickled like tiny needles under his skin, molten poison seeping through his bones and cracking them like candies. He knew it hurt, it always did; this time it felt as if he may be split in half and torn along his seams.

Searing pain arced like lightning up his spine and George screamed, muffled but still enough to tear Dream's attention away from nosing at his neck, genuine worry in his mate's eyes as he looked down at him.

"Darling? Are you okay?" Dream cautiously released his grip on George's hands, letting them fly up to grip onto his fur, George curling in on himself as if to hide from the magic reshaping his body from within. "Here, let me help."

The tentacle finally stopped pulsing and slowly withdrew from George's mouth, leaving a bitter taste on his tongue that he swallowed down quickly, discontent to lay with any more than the pain that already coursed through him. Dream shuffled in place, restless to soothe his mate's discomfort. He tilted his head and the scent of strawberry and blossom surrounded them after a second, George breathing it in desperately and heaving out a sigh when his pain eventually dulled to an ache.

"Mm, thank you Dream."

His mate stroked through his hair with careful fingers. "How do you feel, darling?"

George shrugged half-heartedly, unsure and tired. "Still hurts, s'not so bad now though."

Dream smiled softly, trailing his hands down George's body until they came to rest on his thighs. "Let me distract you, then."

He lifted George's thighs, his grip firm and sure enough to send blood rushing southwards once more, George's body no longer preoccupied by sparking pain and able to relax into sweeter pleasure once more. Dream nosed curiously at his ass for a second, drinking in George's own scent before licking at the slick dripping from his hole.

George shuddered at the feeling, arching his back and crying out when he felt Dream's tongue venture deeper, a smooth glide into his hole before it curled upwards, Dream tasting every inch of him and humming like it was syrupy ambrosia he was drinking. His hands flew to grab Dream's horns, to ground himself more than anything, and a whimper slipped from his lips as Dream's unyielding grip stopped his body from twisting further up as the beast's tongue reached his most sensitive spot; a lick pressed against it for only a brief second before focusing elsewhere, making George gasp out a sob when the desperate buck of his hips did nothing to make it happen again.

"Patience, my love. Let me take care of you." Dream withdrew his tongue for a moment to whisper the assurance, and George felt lightheaded again at the sight of his slick dripping from the fur of his mate's chin. He could only nod weakly in response, letting Dream go eagerly back to his task.

Indeed, Dream's tongue flicked out from his mouth to first lick the dripping mess from his own chin before plunging it back into George's waiting hole, the extra wetness easing the glide in even more as he pushed his tongue deeper to push George further into becoming a boneless, brainless, shaking mess.

George was in paradise, his soul floating somewhere in the air above his body and only tied down by Dream's hands and tongue and the tail twined around his own. His nerves were alight, his body trembling, his skin tingling with whatever transformation was still happening to him; he doubted if he died at this very moment that he'd mind very much. He wouldn't die though, he knew he wouldn't. He was alive, more so than he'd ever been - alive and lit up like starlight by Dream's careful, confident movements, by Dream's hands holding him steady, by Dream's love flowing through him like the blood in his veins.

Dream's tongue pressed once more against his spot and stayed there. George arched his back once

more, a scream ripping from his lungs as he came, his vision turning white.

His sight cleared to Dream leaning over him, a hand stroking his face and another still holding his thigh off the ground.

“Georgie,” Dream smiled, soft and amused. “Are you okay?”

“Mm... Feel amazin’, Dreamie.”

A fond laugh. “I’m glad. Now, can I take care of you again?”

“Always.”

Dream positioned himself, lining his hard cock up with George’s slick hole and settling George by rubbing soothing circles into his hips, smiling at George’s quiet nod before he pushed forwards, sinking his cock in slowly.

George whined, long and loud, gripping tightly to the straw of the nest with one paw and Dream’s fur with the other, desperate for the steady grounding as he was split apart in the most incredible way. Dream’s tongue had loosened him up, but it made little difference when the size difference was still so great, Dream himself groaning with the tightness and stuttering his hips to make George cry out.

“Dream, dreamdreamdream-”

Dream panted, gripping George’s hips tight enough the flushed skin turned white under his fingers. “You- You are okay, right darling?”

“Yes. Yes, I promise- Just-” George shifted his hips and moaned. “So full.”

He might have experienced it before, but that didn’t make it any less intense. Dream was so *big*. The tingling across his skin had started to burn too, all his senses heightened as he struggled for both air and to adjust as Dream finally pushed in all the way. None of his limbs quite felt right, his body’s coordination slipping out of his own grasp as he squeezed his eyes closed and let himself go limp in Dream’s hold, working his own muscles seeming to take an impossible amount of energy now.

He felt Dream shift above him, then a hand cupping his face and a thumb stroking gently across his cheek. It felt different somehow, and George had just enough awareness to realise that, letting out a soft noise of confusion and opening his eyes to find Dream staring directly at him, a look of soft pride and wonder on his face that made George tilt his head in silent questioning.

“Georgie...” Dream breathed out, his hand moving from George’s face to his shoulders, then to his head to pet at his horns, then back again, his touch so gentle and careful that George felt as if he may be made of glass. “You look so beautiful. So perfect. All mine now, forever.”

George fidgeted a little. “I can’t see myself, Dreamie.”

Dream shook his head. “I know. Let me tell you, my darling; you look like *me*.”

“Like you?” George murmured, followed by a soft gasp of realisation. He looked down at himself, exposed under Dream’s gaze, and true to his mate’s word, he *did*. Gone was the pale skin laid bare on his chest and upper arms; in its place was fur, thick and dark brown and covering his entire body. His arms, his legs, his tail, all were longer, thicker, *stronger* even now as he lay underneath Dream with the dizzying thought stuck in his mind that now he truly could never be called human

again.

His mate was still gently petting his face, and as George's awareness slowly returned he noted that Dream's touch wandered from his cheek and slowly down his *snout*. He had a snout now, his last remaining humanity gone now, his features replaced with those of a beast. Finally, *finally*, he was free.

"You see?" Dream asked softly, his gaze filled with love. "You are perfect. So beautiful, my darling, all mine."

"All yours," George breathed, throwing his arms around his mate's shoulders, gripping to him with paws now bigger, claws sharper, still careful as he clung to Dream. "All yours, Dream, please."

"Mine," Dream confirmed, bracing his hands either side of George's head as he began to thrust back into him, all his possessiveness and suffocating love poured into his movement. A noise somewhere between a growl and a purr sounded from deep in his chest and he nipped lightly at George's neck, huffing with each resounding snap of his hips.

George could have sobbed with the emotion of it all. He buried his face into Dream's fur instead, their scents mixing together and sinking back into his lungs as he blinked back his tears. Clenching around Dream made them both groan, and the way his own voice, his own noises, sounded so much more animalistic now filled him with joy. It felt so different, so much better, so much *more* than it had ever felt being human. It felt so right. This was him, this was who he was meant to be. This was who he was meant to become from the moment he stepped into this ruin all those moons ago. He was Dream's, fully and wholly.

Dream slammed into him with a particularly brutal thrust and George almost howled, panting and thrashing his tail behind him as he dug his claws into Dream's back and met each snap of Dream's hips with his own, finding it a little easier now with his larger size but feeling no less full. It was so all-encompassing, intense, overwhelming in the most heavenly way. Flowers and fruit in his lungs, stars behind his eyes and golden thread through his skin, fire in his veins and syrup on his tongue; this was his hereafter, his paradise, his forever.

The swell of Dream's knot was nudging at his hole as it grew, and George couldn't imagine anything he wanted more. *Again*, his body screamed. *Again!*

"Knot me," George gasped, dragging Dream closer, pulling him further into his desperate embrace, moaning as his mate's knot dragged against his rim. "*Breed me.*"

Dream's pace stuttered, slowed for a second. "You want it? Want me to stuff you full and fuck another litter of pups into you?"

"Please!" George begged, growling with need and trying to fuck himself onto Dream's knot. "Breed me, fill me. Love you, want you, please Dream. Want to be stuffed full, please."

Dream snarled, nuzzling his face against George's neck and fucking his knot harder against George's hole. "I will, I will fill you- So good, so perfect for me-"

A final slam, a stinging clasp of claws into skin and Dream's knot slipped into George's hole, locking his cock deep inside as he came with a howl, his cock pressing into just the right spot to send George crashing over the edge with him.

A leaden moment passed, both of them breathing heavily, before they collapsed into the nest wrapped up in each other and locked together.

George sighed, happy and content, the intensity of his high fading into a fuzzy warmth that provided a pleasant feeling and soothed the ache of transformation lingering in his bones. "I love you," He mumbled, nuzzling into Dream's neck and admiring the contrast between the shades of their fur. "Thank you, for... for making me yours."

Dream shook his head lightly, pulling George impossibly closer. "I am so glad I could. You mean so much to me Georgie, my darling, my perfect mate. I love you, and I will love you until we both return to the earth, and forever beyond that."

"And you know I'll always feel the same." George tucked himself against Dream's chest, savouring how his new size let him curl his tail entirely around his mate's body, binding them close. "It's funny... I do miss our pups already, but I am glad it's just us now."

"At least for a time," Dream laughed softly, placing a hand over George's belly and rubbing light circles with his thumb.

"For a time." George agreed, purring quietly when he received an affectionate lick to his face.

And it was hard not to miss the little family they'd created and sent out into the world, hard not to long for their noise and warmth and unending excitement. Hard not to feel the absence, the cold, the relative emptiness of their previously busy home. But as they lay there, basking in the presence of each other and the love flowing between them, George knew they'd be okay.

"I love you," He murmured into the sleepy warmth surrounding them. "Sleep well, Dreamie."

Chapter End Notes

well. it's over. i hope you all loved reading it as much as i loved writing it <3

i can't believe i've spent over a year of my life working on this haha, it's crazy. what's coming after this? i'll be taking a break from this series to work on some oneshots, but i will be returning eventually to write a karlnap sequel as well as some short continuation stories focused on other characters in the same world. look forward to those :]

i'd like to thank everyone who helped me along the way, including my lovely beta readers: Trivvy, Modz, Cece, Ashe, Tofu and Feral, as well as all my friends on twitter, in the Dream Team ao3 discord server, and who brainrotted over this story with me. thank you to everyone who drew fanart for this fic too! it's been incredible seeing what this fic has inspired people to make, and i have every piece saved in my phone <3

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and finally, thank you to all of you, to everyone who has read, kudos'd and commented on this fic. you've kept me going the whole time, and i couldn't have done it without you. <3

if you want to chat you can follow me on twitter here: [@starlitshambles](https://twitter.com/starlitshambles) (NSFW, 18+

only. must have age in bio)

or here: [@voided space](#) (sfw, any age, will post snippets of sfw fics)

or if you have discord, consider [joining the dtao3 server!](#) i'm an admin there and i'm usually pretty active, and there's plenty of lovely people always willing to chat.

thank you all, from the bottom of my heart <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!